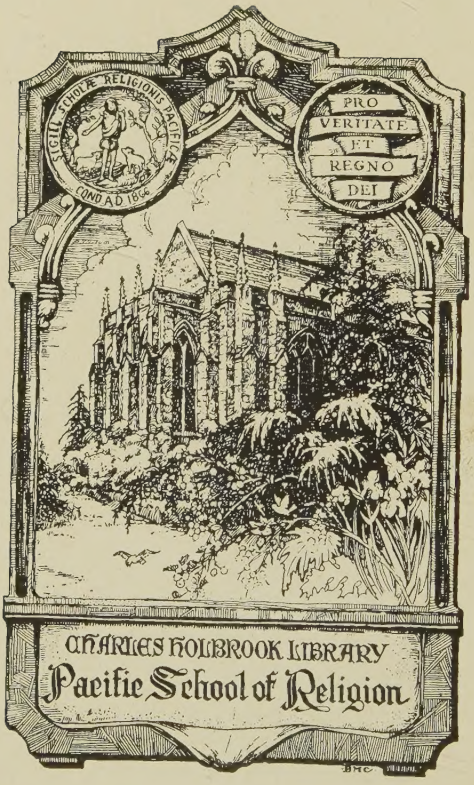

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The Wisdom of the East Series

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WISDOM OF THE EAST

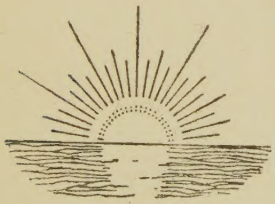
THE CLOUD-MEN OF YAMATO

BEING AN OUTLINE OF MYSTICISM IN JAPANESE LITERATURE

BY E. V. GATENBY, M.A.

Under the shadow of the pine and the plum-tree, sleeping on a high rock, Unkaku (The Cloud-Man) knows not how run the years; there is no calendar in the mountains.

(Old Chinese Poem.)



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NOTE

My thanks are due to Mr. Arthur Waley for permission to quote freely from his translation of the *Nō* plays. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Gundert, the author of *Der Schintoismus im Japanischen Nō-Drama* and other works, for his valuable help, and also to all those fellow-teachers and students who have so patiently answered my questions, translated for me, and taught me of their literature. In particular I am under a great obligation to Professor Doi, of the Tohoku Imperial University, Sendai, who placed the results of his own study at my disposal, and to M. Pouget, of Fukushima, who read my manuscript, and corrected certain errors of fact.

E. V. G.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

THE object of the Editors of this series is a very definite one. They desire above all things that, in their humble way, these books shall be the ambassadors of good-will and understanding between East and West—the old world of Thought and the new of Action. In this endeavour, and in their own sphere, they are but followers of the highest example in the land. They are confident that a deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty philosophy of Oriental thought may help to a revival of that true spirit of Charity which neither despises nor fears the nations of another creed and colour.

L. CRANMER-BYNG.
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KENSINGTON, S.W.

THE CLOUD-MEN OF YAMATO

I

INTRODUCTORY

"There is
One great society alone on earth:
The noble living and the noble dead."

LITERATURE is the common ground on which we all meet, where there are no social barriers, and, more important, no religious barriers. No lover of literature ever heeded an *Index expurgatorius*. Man must express his ideas and learn of what has gone before him, and literature to mankind is the Book of Life, irrespective of creed or caste. In it we find what men have tried to explain of Truth as they have known it, and, following their guidance, we may make quicker progress on our own journey, avoiding pitfalls, and going along the ways of pleasantness and the paths of peace. Literature is a call, and it is a medium through which we find, for in it all beauties—of love, nature, music—sublimated in the imagination of the poets, are spread before us. There are messages from heaven to earth brought by heaven's interpreters; imagination in the highest; rays of the light

that never was on sea or land ; revelation of the world of the spirit. We read in order to stir up the god within us, and as the beauty takes hold of us, the higher life trembles into being, and we rise on wings as of angels. Mystics have approached God in many ways, but they communicate their knowledge to us through one channel—literature ; and we merit our portion with the lost " if we neglect so great salvation."

The following account of mysticism in Japanese literature does not claim to be any more than a brief description of certain work —poetry, drama, and prose—which reveals a mystic temperament in the author. It is not a history of the literature, and it does not go beyond the eighteenth century, as there seems to be nothing of outstanding significance to record in later years. Also a considerable number of minor authors, especially in the early period, have been omitted because, although they show a mystic tendency, this does not differ in any way from that of writers contemporary with them whose verses are quoted. It may be said with truth that the majority of the early poets of Japan were characterized by a mystic outlook ; their training and culture, surroundings and religions, tended to develop the " mystic germ." The different types of mysticism, or rather, its advancing stages, are here fully illustrated.

The Japanese are justly proud of their litera-

ture, which has a long history. Its beginnings are lost in the mists of antiquity and tradition, but since the eighth century, when it had already reached a high level, it has been the noble voice of a great people, expressing the emotions and ideas of a race undisturbed from prehistoric times in their occupation of a land excelled by none in natural beauty. One expects to find great differences between a literature of the Far East and a literature of Europe, but, although the differences are many and important, it is the similarities which strike a foreign student. So many aspects of life in Japan, so many ideas, ways of thinking, and customs, seem to be the direct opposite of our own, that it is surprising to find in the writings of Japanese authors much the same thoughts and feelings which are expressed in the West. Human nature is the same the world over.

The greatest contrast between the literatures of Japan and the West is found in the forms of verse. The two chief metres are the *tanka*, which has held sway for more than a thousand years, and which shows no signs of being superseded, and the *hokku*, or *haikai*, or *haiku*, which was introduced in the sixteenth century. The *tanka* consists of five lines containing 31 syllables arranged 5, 7, 5, 7, 7, while the *hokku* has only three lines of 17 syllables, 5, 7, 5. There is no rhyme. It is claimed that the *tanka* admits of some internal variation or division, some poets

dividing the sense at the end of the third line, which gives a sort of couplet effect to the concluding sevens, while others work on the basis of 5,7. 5,7. 7. But there is nothing corresponding to our infinite variety of lyric measures. Among the earliest poetry are found *naga-uta*—long poems—but long only in comparison with the short *tanka*. These are built up of lines with 5 and 7 syllables alternately, but the longest consists of only one hundred and fifty lines, and most of them are much shorter than this.

The outstanding feature of *tanka* and *hokku* is conciseness. One poem contains one thought, or the beginning of a thought, and is the record of the moment of inspiration only. The heroic couplet is the nearest approach in English to Japanese measures, and *tanka* and *hokku* seem to be composed much as Pope (according to Swift) and Swinburne composed separate couplets, often with little apparent connection, to be worked up later into complete poems. But the Japanese poet has no intention of linking his verses : each stands by itself. It is recorded that Gray, walking with a friend in the fields near Blundeston, suddenly recited the lines—

> " Here pipes the wood-lark, and the song-thrush there
> Scatters his loose notes in the waste of air."

In just the same way the Japanese throws off his thirty-one syllables, and thus it is difficult to trace a line of thought in the work of any one

verse-maker. But just as an isolated couplet may be beautiful by itself, so a *tanka*, especially one of the less condensed variety, can be a perfect example of poetry. The following is a very early one, noteworthy, however, as a poem of genuine feeling. It is supposed to be written by a divine prince in reply to one of farewell by his princess, who, ashamed of having been seen in her true form, that of a sea-monster, had fled to the depths of the ocean :

"In all my life
I shall never forget the maiden
By whose side I lay
On the isle where the wild-geese 'light—
The birds of the wide sea."

There is everywhere in these poems extreme compression of language, much symbolism, and many puns and " pivot-words." All this makes the task of a translator difficult. Some expansion, in order to make the meaning clear, must be resorted to, but very little can be made of the puns, which to us are a decided blemish. To the Japanese, however, they give definite emotional pleasure, as do the pivot-words—a kind of overlapping pun, where two words are run into one, as in the example invented by Kipling when he described a hotel as " bungaloathsome." The symbolism is much easier to understand as an ornament, for we have much of it in our own verse ; our yews and cypress, orange-blossom and laurels, doves and olive-branches,

would need as much explanation in translation as the Japanese plum-blossom, pine-tree, and tortoise. The daintiness and perfection of form, which are lost in translation, constitute a very real beauty, and poems which make no impression on the foreign reader have, for this reason, linked with associations and symbolism and memories aroused, brought tears to the eyes of Japanese listeners. Kimono sleeves are often wet in Japan, in actual fact as well as in poetic fiction or convention. Literary history is full of mention of a *tanka* or *hokku* having caused hearers to weep, not perhaps on account of what was said, but of what was suggested. So that these poems, though slight, are powerful. There is little attempt to explain an emotion fully in a *tanka*, which is often mystic in what it leaves unsaid, provoking the thought to reach out beyond the bounds of the facts mentioned. According to Japanese opinions, if a poet said all that Shelley put into his "Ode to the West Wind," there would be nothing left to the imagination; and the purpose of poetry is to arouse thoughts rather than express them. As an example of this typical restraint in Japanese poetry we may quote a *hokku* by Yasuhara Teishitsu (1610–1673) which is very famous:

"Kore wa, kore wa,
To bakari hana no
Yoshino yama."

"Ah this, ah this,
How very distant the (cherry) flowers
Of Yoshino Mountain."

Expanding, or giving what a Japanese understands by the poem, we may write: "How impossible it is to describe the entrancing beauty of the famous cherry-blossoms on our beloved Yoshino. My emotion is too deep for words." The original is not much more than a confession of an inability to express a feeling, but this is sufficient to make a Japanese recollect his own rapture—the cherries on Yoshino are all but worshipped—and sympathize with a similar unutterable intensity of feeling in another.

And therefore, slight as the poems are, the reader may find in them thoughts and ideas which, though detached, are worthy of comparison with much that is contained in our Western poetry. A greater deficiency than lack of length or continuity seems to be limitation of subject. The greater part of the best poetry of the Japanese is inspired by Nature. There is little beauty in their mythology, and they have nothing to correspond to Greek ideals and perfection, so that a native poet never yearns to—

> "Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
> Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn."

And the human body, too, has not appealed to them as "human form divine."[1] No ivory flank of Aphrodite, in carving or imagination,

[1] Partly because of its symmetry. See later chapters on Kenkō and Zen.

has stirred the Eastern poets' blood.[1] Even to-day much that is grotesque is produced by imitators of Occidental sculpture and painting of nude forms. Music, as we understand it, did not exist in Japan until after the Meiji Restoration. Even literature itself is apt to be neglected. Very little great poetry in Japan has been inspired by love, and no writer seems ever to have been carried away by an enthralling and noble passion. Neither has the message of religion succeeded in rousing enthusiasms, though the influence of Buddhism has been strong. It is only the voice of Nature which has really called forth a response from the hearts of the Japanese, in whom there is a long-descended, deeply ingrained, and alert sensitiveness to the beauties around them. Natural beauty is constantly in the mind of a native of Japan, and one can hardly pick up a private letter,[2] or a student's composition, much less a newspaper, without finding some reference to it—maybe only that a certain flower is now at its best, or that the first snow has been seen on Fuji San. In any moment of yearning or sadness the Japanese

[1] Murasaki Shikibu shrinks from the "ugliness" of naked bodies glimpsed during a night alarm. See "Diaries of Court Ladies of Old Japan." Trans. Ōmori and Doi.

[2] Kenkō, in the *Tsure-zure-gusa*, is amused at the indignation of a friend who grumbled that in a letter he had received from him there was no mention of the snow which had just fallen.

turn to some beautiful thing—a cherry-tree, a mountain, the moon—for consolation, and it has been said that they worship the beauties of a landscape more truly than any god. Japan itself is one of the most beautiful countries in the world, and the beauty is not confined to certain localities, but is found everywhere, the only approach to ugliness being the modern industrial cities. It would have been strange if the people, surrounded on every side by the magic of mountain, lake, and seashore, had not felt its influence and expressed their emotion. We can understand something of the effect produced on their minds when we find festivals for admiring the freshly-fallen snow, houses with rooms specially built for viewing the moon, and schools of flower arrangement,[1] where the twigs and blossoms are so artfully placed in relation to their surroundings and light and shade that they seem to be straining away to the Infinite.

Amongst genuine appreciation there is doubtless, as in the poetry of all countries, much that is conventional, and it is perhaps convention which has led to the ignoring of certain aspects of Nature which we are accustomed to admire in the West; but against this much is included which we neglect. For example, the Japanese say little of the grandeur of Nature, or of stars or sunsets, and they seem not to include all birds,

[1] Influenced by Buddhism.

flowers or trees in their admiration ; but they fix unerringly on beauty in small things, especially the humming or " singing " of certain insects.

It is difficult to estimate the importance of Buddhism in Japanese literature. Its influence is powerful often when there is no evidence, in the language used, of its presence, and the task of tracing its effects and the expression of its ideas in prose and verse is one for a Buddhist scholar who is familiar with the teachings and beliefs of the native sects. Zen ideals (to be discussed in a later chapter) took strong hold of the imagination of the cultured classes, and inspired a good deal of verse which can be interpreted only in terms of religious experience.

We cannot, therefore, classify Japanese mystics according to several modes of approach, for only two main influences were at work, namely, natural beauty and Buddhism. In the earliest times love of Nature led to pantheism, and this belief found in Buddhism congenial soil for growth and fuller development. Zen Buddhism in particular encouraged the idea of an all-embracing unity, so that it was easy for a Japanese to take into his religion his Nature-worship, for he found that it was a help rather than a hindrance. Nearly all Japanese mysticism has its roots in love of Nature, but there is no claim to full enlightenment except by those who have had a Buddhist training. Buddhism reached

Japan, according to the date usually given, in A.D. 552, and the first mystical sects, Tendai and Shingon, arose at the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century, continuing to grow during the Heian Epoch (794–1159); but they had very little influence on literature until the eleventh century. Thus roughly until about the year 1000 we shall see in some Japanese poets a deep enthusiasm for natural beauty leading them along the path that Wordsworth followed, but not taking them further than a vague belief that somehow they could merge themselves in the beauty they beheld and there find peace. Then, with the spread of Buddhism, there seems at first to be the idea that delight in Nature may lead nowhere, that it may be only one of the delusions, and the rapturous feelings inspired by nature and religion are not ascribed to the same source. Finally, by the beginning of the fifteenth century, or a little before, Nature and Buddhism blend, and it is recognized that the beauties of the world are stepping-stones to illumination.

II

EARLY PANTHEISM

THE bulk of the best poetry from the seventh to the fifteenth century is preserved in official and private collections which began with the *Manyōshū*, the "Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves," compiled by Imperial order early in the ninth century. The last of the official collections, known as the "twenty-first," appeared in 1438, in the reign of the Emperor Gohanazono. The finest poetry written in Japan appeared in the eighth century, the Nara Period (710–784), and it is this, together with some earlier specimens of perhaps the sixth and seventh centuries, which makes up the Manyōshū. The next collection of note was the Kokinshiu (Old and New Poems), made about the year 922, containing the best poems—in the opinion of the compilers—of the preceding one hundred and fifty years. Of other compilations perhaps the most popular is the "One Hundred Poems by One Hundred Authors," the *Hyaku-nin-isshiu*, 1235. After the Kokinshiu there is a steady decline in the value of the poetry considered as a whole, due perhaps not so much to the limitation to thirty-one syllables as to the deadening and convention-

alizing influence of the court. Most of the poetry was "court" poetry, and as the art of composing *tanka* became more and more a polite accomplishment, true inspiration disappeared. It is true that a new metre, the Ima-yō (present fashion) arose in the thirteenth century, but it was merely a succession of seven and five syllables alternately, and nothing of much note was written in it.

One point worthy of observation is that the poetry, unlike the prose, admitted no Chinese vocabulary. It was probably for this reason that Buddhist ideas seldom entered into the verse, which was reserved for the expression of Japanese thoughts. In some collections there were divisions containing poems dealing with the seasons, love, sorrow, partings, etc., but not with religion.

There can be little doubt that there is mystic feeling underlying many of these short poems, though to a foreign reader the translation may not convey much more than a description of something seen, or at most be an exclamation at the sight of beauty. *Tanka* (as well as *hokku*) have been aptly called epigrams, and in the original they do possess that property of the epigram of expressing a great deal most forcibly in few words, and of arousing in the reader other related ideas. We know from the way the Japanese discuss the poems, and from their comments on them, that they can inspire deep

and genuine emotion, that they contain more than we can find in a translation. The real beauty of the verses is elusive. To understand it one must be familiar with the mental outlook of the Japanese, including their reverence for natural beauty, their meditation over it, and their confessed communion in spirit with pine-tree, moonlight, and cherry-blossom. The mood in which the best verses were written was undoubtedly mystic, and though it seems strange to us to be told to seek in the poetry for something which is only hinted at, or even not expressed at all, that is exactly what the Japanese expect. Mere statements about the beauties of nature seem to have power to convey to a Japanese reader a knowledge of and sympathy with the emotion which caused the statements to be made. Until a FitzGerald can interpret for us, we shall not be able to penetrate to the heart of Japanese poetry except by an understanding of the original.

The two best poets of this early period were Akahito (eighth century) and Hitomaro (d. 729). Ki no Tsurayuki (883–946), while a good poet, is more entitled to fame for his famous preface to the *Kokinshiu*, in which he shows that he realized the significance of great poetry. Izumi Shikibu (eleventh century), the author of a well-known diary, wrote charming love verses, plaintive and melancholy, which native critics praise highly, but they do not appear to contain

anything of higher import than the hopes and fears and disappointments of the occasion. Saigyō Hōshi (1118–1190) was the first poet who deserves to be classed as a genuine mystic, and much of his thought was undoubtedly the outcome of Buddhist philosophy. Before his time, we may treat poetry as a whole, with some reference to the outstanding authors, and indicating examples of verse which show that the writer was seeking to express more than sensuous emotion.

That the existing ideals of poetry were high, at any rate before the year 1000, and pointed to imagination rather than fancy, may be seen from Tsurayuki's preface to the *Kokinshiu*. A few quotations from C. H. Page's translation [1] will illustrate this :

"The poetry of Japan has for its seed-plot man's heart, whence it grows and unfolds into a myriad leaves of speech. Manifold are men's concerns in this world of ours ; and, whatever they see, whatever they hear, everything that touches their hearts, must somehow find expression. Likewise when we listen to the cry of the nightingale among the flowers, or the voice of the frogs [2] in the water, we know that everything

[1] In *Japanese Poetry* : Houghton Mifflin Co., New York. Other translations by Page quoted here are from the same work.

[2] Always musical according to Japanese ideas, and not unpleasing on blue moonlight nights to the unprejudiced foreign ear.

which breathes the breath of life somehow composes poems of its own.

" Poetry, in effortless play, moves the heavens and earth, touches with pity Gods and Demons invisible, inclines the hearts of men and women to each other, soothes the rough warrior's soul. . . ."

" So it came about that our love of the flowers, our worship of bird-song, our sadness in watching the mists, our grief at the sight of the dew, all the manifold moods of man's heart, found expression in varying speech."

(In days of old) " always in poetry they unburdened their souls " . . . " only in making of songs could man's heart find relief."

It is a common practice of Japanese authors to give a list of things which arouse pleasure or delight, or repulsion, just as Rupert Brooke, in " The Great Lover," catalogues a multitude of objects which he has loved. Tsurayuki mentions everything he can think of which arouses poetical feeling—

. . . " Or at sight of dew on the grass, or of foam floating by on the river, were startled with a strange surprise to know it the emblem of their lives. . . ."

Such feeling is at any rate the beginning of revelation akin to the faculty which enables one to " see a world in a grain of sand." It proves that the symbolism in Japanese poetry was consciously used in the effort to communicate that reflection of truth which the poets had seen.

Himself a poet, Tsurayuki criticized his predecessors with judgment and sympathy, but would tolerate nothing "low" in style, good though the matter might be. He was one of the few who knew the high function of poetry. For him it was more than composition according to rules and conventions. He knew that it had to—

"Give to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name,"

to be the connecting link between the beauty without and the beauty within, and bring a realization of union; that many receive its messages, and understand them wholly or in part, but that few can interpret them for others. Speaking of the generality of poets, he declares—"for the most part they yearn after poetry rather than attain it."

As for Tsurayuki's own poetry, Revon says of it [1] that it has "plus de finesse que d'inspiration," a criticism which may be applied to much of the verse of any period in Japan. But there is more of definiteness and finality in a great deal of his work than is found in his contemporaries, less of mere suggestion, and more completeness and directness of thought. He is not content to hint at the mystery of things unseen:

"The heart of man can never be understood:
But in my native village the flowers give forth their perfume as before."

[1] In *Anthologie de la Littérature Japonaise*, p. 138.

" Naught is so fleeting as the cherry-flower,
You say. . . . Yet I remember well the hour
When life's bloom withered at one spoken word—
And not a breath of wind had stirred."
(Trans. : C. H. Page.)

" Who was it gave a name
To love ? . . . 'Twas wasted breath.
For are not love and death
One and the same ? "
(Trans. : C. H. Page.)

This last example is doubtless fanciful, but it is at least a poetical idea, and the poet is understood as pointing to the uplifting and purifying effect of love, which, like death itself, may lead to fuller and richer experience.

Poems dealing with love are very numerous, but though they express longing and tenderness they are notable chiefly for their play on words. There is no suggestion of overwhelming passion, or of love on earth revealing a higher and divine love. Of pretty fancies there are plenty, such as the following by Sosei,[1] in the *Kokinshiu* :

" The poppy of forgetfulness I sought
That seers had told me of. . . .
Then spoke the wisest : ' It can ne'er be bought.
It groweth only in hearts that know not love.' "
(Trans. : C. H. Page)

The diary of Izumi Shikibu (eleventh century) is the record of the course of a sincere love affair, and is packed with *tanka* which prettily and cleverly tell of the varied emotions she felt ; but

[1] Ninth century.

though she is ranked among the greatest of the women poets of Japan, it is her skill rather than her depth of thought which impresses the reader. The real note of unsatisfied longing is sounded by Hitomaro, mourning the death of a lover :

" Through early autumn woods I seek alone,
By paths too quickly strewn with gold and red,
The hidden forest ways she wanders on,
Unseen, beyond some turning just ahead."
(Trans. : C. H. Page.)

The same poet definitely believed in the unity of all things, and some of his verses remind one of Shelley's " He is made one with nature." When lamenting over Hijikatano Iratsuko, after the smoke of the funeral pyre had ascended, he wrote :

" Oh, is it my beloved, the cloud that wanders
In the ravine
Of the deep secluded Hatsuse Mountain ? "

And in two poems in which he grieves for an Izumo girl who was drowned in the River Yoshino and afterwards cremated, he has the same idea of the absorption of the body and spirit into the beauty of nature :

" The glossy hair of the maiden from Izumo,
Where reeds are abundant,
Is floating (weed-like) in the river of Yoshino."

" Has she turned into mist,
The maiden of Izumo of many clouds ?
It trails over the hills of Yoshino." [1]

[1] These three poems are from a private translation by Professor K. Doi.

Purity and beauty always go hand in hand. Yet absolute purity is never attained, for the nearer we get to it, through cleansing of body and mind, the more we realize that it is an essence of the spirit, an ideal, a something ever beyond us, but ultimately, we feel, attainable, and therefore to be worshipped. Purity, and the emblems of purity, have always been regarded in a semi-religious light, and a ritual of purification is amongst the earliest prose extant in Japan.[1] The native poets admit that there is always a stage of purity beyond what our senses recognize as pure, and frequently refer to the ultra-refinement which the soul demands. This idea enters into the national sentiment connected with Mount Fuji, for the Japanese, artists to their finger-tips, instinctively worship what is perfect.[2] Fuji San is taken as the ideal nowhere else attained. The irregularity on one side of the mountain is tacitly ignored, and one may grant

[1] In the *Yengishiki*, a tenth-century collection of earlier Norito, or Shintō prayers, and Ceremonial Laws.

[2] It has been pointed out, however, that the admiration for the perfection of form of Mount Fuji is an exception, for most natural objects, e.g. mountains and pine-trees, which make an appeal to the Japanese, are rugged and irregular. The strong winds of Japan twist the pines out of their normal growth into fantastic shapes, and it is these which artists use in their paintings. The storm-beaten tree is felt to be emblematic of the life of man. Before the Meiji period (mid-nineteenth century) there was no word in Japanese for "symmetry." For æsthetic refinements introduced by Zen see later chapter.

that the great volcano, when viewed from points where its unevenness is not revealed, is a worthy object of worship. No spire of a Christian church, however lofty or graceful, ever carried the thoughts of men into dim distances as the cone of Fuji has done. It has been painted by the great Japanese painters hundreds of times, yet always under a new aspect. The immense height and dignity of the mountain, firm-set on the land over which it towers ; its hidden fire and force ; the glory of the dawn behind it ; the smooth slopes, so often leading up to and losing themselves in the clouds ; and the crown of snow, emblem of purity, have drawn the imagination of the Japanese from before the beginning of history. It has become a national idea, part of the life of Japan, and the literature is full of references to the attitude in which it is regarded. Its snows are " whiter than utmost white " ; men compared their love to its flames, inextinguishable even by the gods ; Akahito speaks of it as shadowing the light of sun and moon, and declares that the clouds themselves fear to pass it—

" Since heaven and earth have been parted
Ever divine and glorious
Towers Fuji's crest in Suruga.
Toward the plain of Heaven I look up,
And see the mountain hide
The coursing sun and the shining moon.
White clouds hover wayless,
And ceaselessly snow falls !

Let us ever sing and praise
The lofty Mount Fuji!
Along the shore of Tago I wander forth and gaze,
Pure white!
On Fuji's high crest snow has fallen."

(Akahito—a "long poem" in the *Manyōshū*. Privately translated by K. Doi.)

There is also another good "long poem" (*nagauta*) anonymous, in the *Manyōshū*, in which the author gives an admirable impression of the adoration in which the mountain is held:

"Where fertile Kai out-stretches on one hand,
And on the other, broad Suruga-Land,
Out of their midst, beyond the ken of man,
Rises the glorious peak of Fuji San.
The clouds themselves can hardly climb the height,
The birds but skirt its sides in soaring flight.
Its fire is quenched with ever-falling snow,
Its snows are melted in a quenchless flame;
I find no word to tell of it, no name
To call it by—but this I surely know,
It is a wondrous god of fire and snow.
The Sea of See within it lies; there flow
Adown its sides the waves of Fuji River,
That all must cross, who East or Westward go.
Of Yamato, Nippon, the Sunrise-Land,
It is the God, the Treasure, the Joy-giver.
O Peak of Fuji in Suruga-Land,
Fuji-no-Yama, I could stand
And gaze on thee for ever and for ever!"

(Trans.: C. H. Page.)

Cherry-blossom, too, is a symbol of purity, and perhaps, even more than Mount Fuji, an object of national worship. Motoöri[1] (1730–1801), in a famous *tanka*, declares that the spirit of Japan

[1] A famous scholar. See last chapter.

is "the cherry-flowers which spread their perfume in the morning air." The poets of Japan, from the earliest period, have been lavish in their praise of the snow-like blooms. In the brief days of cherry-blossom time, a week or two at the beginning of April, the enthusiasm of the people is at its height, and groves and avenues are filled night and day with crowds who go to gaze their fill on the trees on which hardly a dark spot can be seen. "As the cherry amongst flowers, so should the *samurai* be amongst men." The white blossoms are typical of ideals realized, for they come later than the plum, which is beautiful, and full of promise, yet still below expectation. The yearning the latter arouses for purity and perfection seems momentarily satisfied when the cherry-bloom unfolds; but its glory waxes and wanes all too soon, and after having a glimpse of what is almost an ornament of heaven itself the worshippers turn to find the petals falling, and all their old longing is renewed—

> "O cherry-flowers, in perfect beauty dight,
> I fain would bid you fall and die to-day. . . .
> So should your lovers' worship of you stay
> For ever at the height."
> (From the *Manyōshū*. Trans.: C. H. Page.)

The author knows that ecstasy of any kind can be but for a while. Even though the conditions which aroused it changed not, satiety or indifference would ensue. Akahito also realized

that the rarity of perfect beauty constituted much of its charm:

> " If cherry-blossoms in their pride
> Covered the far-flung mountain-side
> Day after day, the summer through,
> Should we praise them as we do ? "
> (Trans. : C. H. Page.)

It is in appreciation of the beauties around them that the early poets are at their best. The urgent voice of nature does not fall on deaf ears, and they are always listening to it and responding to the best of their ability. Akahito writes:

> " On the spring moor
> To gather violets
> I went forth ;
> Its charm so held me
> That I stayed till morn."

Aston, who translates this,[1] suggests that it implies a visit to a lover, but Japanese readers see in it only the attraction of a natural scene. A writer on Japan once made the erroneous statement, widely accepted by foreign readers, that the birds of Japan had no song, and the flowers no scent. Birds are few in number compared with those in England, but many of them sing sweetly, if not in the full morning chorus Westerners are accustomed to ; and most flowers

[1] In *Japanese Literature*, p. 48.

have a delicate perfume, particularly the plum blossom, which "scents the evening gale"—

"Dark nights in spring
The plum-flowers hide in gloom. . . .
Yet night nor death can hide
Their strange perfume."
(By Mitsune, in the *Kokinshiu*. Trans.: C. H. Page).

In some instances there is evidence of the desire for physical contact with unattainable beauty—

"Oh! that the white waves far out
On the sea of Ise
Were but flowers,
That I might gather them
And bring them as a gift to my love."
(Prince Aki, A.D. 740. Trans.: Aston.)

Yet, however close we may come to a flower, for example, and however much we may absorb of its fragrance, the gulf to be bridged seems wide as ever. Some poems reveal the disappointment of an unsatisfied longing, while others suggest that there has been a brief glimpse of the heart's desire. All the world over beauty arouses sadness because it cannot be grasped or comprehended; it induces questioning thoughts which receive no answer, except that the heavenly beauty here reflected is still out of reach. Something of this regret is shown in the following:

"Gaze I at the moon,
Myriad things arise in thought,
And my thoughts are sad;—
Yet 'tis not for me alone
That the autumn time has come."
(By Ōe no Chisato, ninth century. Trans.: Clay MacCauley in Vol. 37, *Transactions A. Soc. of Japan.*)

" The pine bough bends across the moon,
Where women beat their cloth alone
By Tama's bank. The quiet autumn scene
Pierces the heart with loveliness too keen."

(By Toshiyori, died early in twelfth century. Trans. : C. H. Page.)

" I must go to some land
Where no cuckoos [1] are. . . .
It so racks me with longing
Their song to hear."

(By the Lady of Kasa, in the *Manyōshū*. Trans. : C. H. Page.)

But there is regret when the beauty vanishes, or if it passes away too quickly—

" O winds of heaven, blow,
And bar the ways of the clouds,
That I may gaze awhile on their purity."
(Henjō, in the *Kokinshiu*.)

Or an overwhelming melancholy enwraps the heart of the poet, blinding him to the consolation which solitude so often brings to the seeker after peace. Thus Fujiwara no Okikaze, old and friendless, knows that the famous pines of Takasago still wave in the breeze, but he cannot commune with them.[2] And Minamoto no Muneyuki is touched by the inexpressible loneliness of a mountain village, which is increased in the winter when men go to the plains and the grass is dead ; but the stillness brings no comfort.[3]

[1] The call of the cuckoo—in Japan, three or more notes, " cuck-cuck . . . oo "—is associated with love-longing.
[2] *Hyaku-nin-isshiu*, No. 34.
[3] Ibid., No. 28.

The opposite sentiment is expressed by the author of the 66th poem in the *Hyaku-nin-isshiu*—

> "Let us, each for each
> Pitying, hold tender thought,
> Mountain cherry-flower!
> Other than thee, lonely flower,
> There is none I know as friend."
> (Trans.: Clay MacCauley.)

One of the rare instances in which a poet links together a series of poems on the same subject—or perhaps where they are grouped together by the editor—occurs in the *Manyōshū*, where there are thirteen *tanka* by Ōtomo no Tabito (665–731) on *sake*, the national stimulant. On the surface one sees little but a joyous enthusiasm for the pleasures of the cup, but the official commentaries devote many pages to interpretation, seeking to prove that there is a deeper significance. As in the Rubáiyát, wine is regarded as a symbol of the soul, its powerful influence over the mind and body of man securing for it recognition as possessing supernatural qualities. Tabito declared that *sake* was wisdom, the way to happiness, consolation for all the troubles of life—

> "That which the seven sages sought,
> Those men of olden times,
> Was *sake*, beyond all doubt.
>
> "Instead of holding forth
> Wisely, with grave mien,
> How much better to drink *sake*,
> To get drunk, and to shout aloud."

" Since it is true
That death comes at last for all,
Let us be joyful
While we are alive."

" Even the jewel
Which sparkles in the night
Is less to us than the uplifting of the heart
Which comes by drinking *sake*."

These four examples can certainly reveal little to the Western reader in translation, but we may accept the conclusions of the Japanese commentators that Tabito was pointing to higher things than physical intoxication. It may seem that drunkenness is an unworthy emblem of divine ecstasy, but we may remember lines in our own poetry like Crashaw's " Blood of Christ inebriate me ! " Appropriateness of symbol is largely decided by custom and prejudice.

We may sum up this early poetry of which examples have been given as being purely Japanese in spirit, containing ideas not influenced by the Buddhism brought over from China and Korea. There is no strict division, of course, between this period of early pantheism and Nature-worship and the time when most reflective writing came to be affected by Buddhist thought. There is, for instance, a reference to rebirth as an insect or a bird in one of the thirteen *Manyōshū* " *sake* " poems mentioned above. The verses quoted in this chapter only show the Japanese as moved by an inexpressible emotion

at the sight of beauty and recording something of what they feel, not as yet seeking for an explanation of the cause of their sadness or elation. Further enlightenment came with the spread of Buddhism, but, as we shall see, there was at first the suspicion that joy in Nature was one of the delusions, and consequently religion and poetry did not readily blend. Still, we may take it that the early Nature-lovers, entranced by the purity of the cherry-blossoms, awed by the grandeur of Mount Fuji, moved to tears by the song of birds, had glimpses of " other worlds than ours."

" Many paths there be
To reach the mountain's height ;
But all who climb there see
The same moon's light."
(Anonymous. Trans. : C. H. Page.)

III

BUDDHISM AND NATURE

THE *tanka* quoted at the end of the last chapter illustrates the combining of nature and Buddhist symbols, for mention of the moon often implies a reference to the Buddha himself, who shines upon men and lights their way. There is a well-known *tanka* by Izumi no Shikibu, said to have been composed on her death-bed:

> "Out of the dark
> Into a dark path
> I now must enter:
> Shine (on me) from afar,
> Moon of the mountain fringe!"
> (Trans.: Waley.[1])

The moon here is obviously the guiding light of the Buddha. A diarist contemporary with her, a daughter of Sugawara no Takasuye, gave an account of two journeys, one to Sarashina, in the "Sarashina Nikki." Her outlook on life was somewhat gloomy, but she is perhaps the first writer definitely to admit the finding of consolation in the Buddhist religion. In the midst of much description of scenery there are passing references to temples and images of the Buddha which show that she had experienced

[1] In *Japanese Poetry*, p. 86.

something more powerful in its attraction than the beauty of the landscape:

"When we were near the barrier I saw the face of a roughly-hewn Buddha, sixteen feet high, which towered over a rude fence. Serene and indifferent to its surroundings, it stood unregarded in this deserted place; but I, passing by, received a message from it." [1]

And again she describes how, when she was "before the altar in the Kiyomidzu Temple, in a faintly dreamy state of mind, which was neither sleeping nor waking," [2] a man appeared and told her that she had been a Buddhist priest and artist in a previous life. She had died in the act of covering a Buddha (in that temple) with gold foil. "Shadowy recollections" cannot be so easily explained in the West, though they do frequently lead to a belief in pre-existence.

Three authors deserving of fuller treatment in this period are Saigyō-Hōshi (1118–1190), Kamo Chōmei (1154–1216), and Kenkō-Bōshi (1282–1350).

Saigyō, whose name was originally Satō Yoshikiyo, was of noble parentage, and when quite a young man succeeded his father in his position at court. He distinguished himself by his mental and physical abilities, studying Chinese and Buddhist writings, and earning

[1] *Diaries of Court Ladies of Old Japan.* Trans. by Annie Shepley Ōmori and Kochi Doi, p. 15.

[2] Ibid., p. 43.

such respect as a poet that he was admitted a member of the regular company of court poets. The Ex-Emperor Toba was his especial patron, and the young courtier served in his bodyguard. He was leading a healthy and happy life, free from care, when, shocked at the sudden death of a friend, he decided to abandon his wife and little daughter, leave the world, and become a monk. During the remainder of his life he was for the most part a travelling priest, first calling himself Oni (ghost), and finally Saigyō, "Wanderer to the West," where the Buddhist paradise lies. He lived up to his name, roaming far and wide in Japan, with no settled home, but preferring the more beautiful and romantic districts; for over and above his Buddhist beliefs he was filled with a deep love of nature, which exerted a profound influence on him. At last, in his sixty-fourth year, he returned to Kyōto, but found all changed: neither his home nor his family was left, and he gave vent to his feelings in a *tanka*:

"Frail and weak have I become,
And yet I have survived much:
Whither have they gone,
My home and loved ones?"

Nine years later he died, in the spring-time, as he had wished—

"In the month of spring, under the open blossoms,
While the full moon shines above, would I lay down this life."

About three thousand of Saigyō's *tanka* were collected in the *Sankashiu*, and in them he gives expression to his varied reflections on life and nature, covering a fairly wide range from simple descriptions of what he saw to wondering curiosity about what he felt; but one has to remember that what is apparently simple description may often contain a hidden meaning obvious to a Buddhist. Still, the little poems in which he calls attention to the beauties he observed are charming in themselves, apart from the interpretation of the commentators. He gives us brief glimpses after the manner of Japanese poets:—

"When the evening shower has passed, behold the many pearls rolling on the floating lotus-leaves in the moonlight."

His more reflective poems, however, are more than a mere picture. He claimed kinship with nature, and felt himself a part of his surroundings, but, unlike other poets, asked himself why he was conscious of sympathy:

> "Why do I remain in harmony with the flowers?
> In all else I have withdrawn from the world."

He yearned for deeper and deeper self-submergence, not content with the brief moments of exaltation vouchsafed him, but desiring complete absorption, or at least the power to enter into communion at will instead of having to wait for the mysterious uplifting of the soul

which the mystic can prepare himself for, but which he cannot summon or control. Particularly susceptible to the influence of moonlight, yet unable to respond as much as he wished, he wrote :

> " I will turn myself into a pool of tears : so can
> I reflect the moonlight to my heart's content."

And we may read into this verse his striving after further spiritual insight. The moon seems to have been his favourite symbol, though he found in many other natural objects an analogy with human life. Serenely shining in the heavens, the moon, like himself, was detached from worldly troubles—

" The moon shines on untroubled by the anguish of the earth ; in it I behold a picture of my heart."

Pine-trees reminded him of his advanced years ; he contrasted the unchanging Matsuyama shore with fleeting human life ; he saw Mount Fuji towering up grandly to the skies, and thought of his own infinite aspirations, humbly admitting his inability to achieve great things—

" The smoke of Fuji vanishes, blown by the wind into the high sky ; and my own thoughts futilely wander forth and are lost in the world."

Reading his poetry, one can follow him as he watches the seasons round, taking comfort here, drawing a lesson there, at times simply rejoicing

in a piece of scenery before him, all his long life never doubting, although at times "th' excess of glory" might be obscured. Spring was his favourite season, and even in summer he looked back longingly to it; the vanishing of any beauty, temporary though the loss might be, brought from him sighs of regret:

"Has the spring really passed away from Naniwa? Have I seen it only in dreams? For I hear the sad soughing of the wind through the withered leaves of the rushes."

"I have gazed into the heart of the flowers until I seem to be one with them. And so, if I see them pass away, my heart will break at the bitter farewell song."

He seems sad in several of his verses, but never despondent; it was a sadness of reflection and sympathy. His percipience of the sensuous world was so vivid that the physical separation was a real grief; and the idea of parting for ever from his beloved spring flowers made him envy the long-lived trees:

"Most deeply am I moved by the blossoms of an old tree; for I am sad when I think how often hereafter this same tree shall greet the spring."

In autumn, while he marvelled at the rich brocades of the crimson maples, he was more impressed by the melancholy and loneliness of the dying year—

" When, in autumn, at evening time, he sees the snipe fly away from the dreary marsh, even a man whose heart is not easily moved is compelled to feel *aware* (sad)." [1]

Much might be written on the solitude of mystics. One and all, from those with fuller experience to the blind gropers after a light they are hardly aware of, are impelled to retire for a space from their fellow-men. Whatever the future may bring, there can be no doubt of the strong individuality of our nature here, and while human love, which draws us closer together, is felt to be symbolic of the divine love, it is no more than a symbol. Human souls do not mingle for " the flight of the Alone to the Alone." These wandering monks, of whom Saigyō, Chōmei, and Bashō [2] are the noblest types, seem to have chosen, partly in imitation of the Buddha's example, the most profitable form of religious life, being in the world, yet not of it; able to withdraw entirely for so long as they desired, or to keep under observation the human struggling which taught them the need of salvation. Saigyō spent one year in a hermit's hut on a mountain slope, and another year in a temple, but he was no mere recluse. He knew the value of solitude for " the silent working of the spirit," and liked to be alone in his contem-

[1] See page 123 for a discussion of *aware*.
[2] See page 96.

plation of beautiful things. The only fault he could find with the cherry-blossoms was that they attracted people to crowd to the places where they grew. Further, he realized that to be alone, and especially alone with nature, is uplifting in that it produces a sense of equality—the humblest may aspire, and the richest gifts are theirs :

" It was a desolate house, and no one would trouble to visit it. But the moon shone gently on it through the leaves."

Gentle in spirit, kind and unselfish, but firm of purpose, he followed the Way unfalteringly. It is related of him that he spoke his opinion boldly, even in the presence of Yoritomo, but would not stay at his request, and refused to accept any gift save a silver cat, which he threw to the children in the street as he went away. On one occasion an envious priest invited the wanderer to spend the night with him, and boasted beforehand to his companions that he would strike him ; but he could not, and explained that it was the might of the spirit shining out from Saigyō's face which prevented him. Kenkō mentions him in the *Tsure-zure-gusa* [1] as having been annoyed by an instance of cruelty to birds. Anything which destroys harmony, or which cannot join in it, is a hindrance to the mystic, and we find him lamenting that others, less

[1] See page 58.

sensitive than himself, could not share his happiness—

> "Some there seem to be
> On whose light and wayward hearts
> Nothing seems to strike,
> Save the wind that whistles shrill
> Heralding the autumn chill."
> (Trans.: W. N. Porter.[1])

He wished to communicate what had been revealed to him in his lonely musings, but met with obstacles in his inability to find words to tell of them, and in the uncomprehending hearts of the people:

"How shall I break forth to the people of the moon's glories? Not a single man will understand what I now experience."

Even to himself the cause of his emotion was not always apparent, and on one of the few occasions on which he admits being affected by other than natural objects he wistfully muses in front of the Ise shrines in a *tanka* since often quoted:

> "What it is that dwelleth here
> I know not;
> Yet my heart is full of gratitude,[2]
> And the tears trickle down."
> (Trans.: Aston.)

[1] In his translation of the *Tsure-zure-gusa*.

[2] Mr. Waley points out (page 102, *Japanese Poetry*) that the word *katajikenasa*, here translated as "full of gratitude," in the classical language means "very much afraid," and renders it by "in extreme awe."

Would that Saigyō could have written more fully, uttered more than a passing sigh at the mystery enwrapping the holy of holies, the national and imperial shrine! Keats gave us a complete ode on the Grecian urn, but he sums up his thoughts in—

> "Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought,
> As doth eternity,"

before going on to solve the problem by "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." Saigyō offers no solution, and the Japanese find more poetic pleasure in being trusted to understand, for they know what is meant and implied. Speaking of this poem, Kyusō [1] says: "God came."

Saigyō tells of a similar experience in the moonlight—

> "Is it then the moon
> That has made me sad, as though
> It had bade me grieve?
> Lifting up my troubled face—
> Ah! the tears, the (mournful) tears!"
> (Trans.: Clay MacCauley.)

To this translation, in his edition of the *Hyaku-nin-isshiu*, Dr. MacCauley adds the following note: "This *tanka* is interpreted as the outflow of emotion occasioned but not caused by the moonlight. It is as though the poet had said, 'When I look at the moon, I become unutterably sad, and my eyes fill with tears. But I know now

[1] See page 115.

that the moon does not cause my sadness ; that really is the outflow of my own inner mood.' "

How much Buddhist beliefs directly influenced and guided the thoughts of Japanese poets it is difficult to estimate, for the greatest did not write verses of religious enthusiasm. They contented themselves with allusions, understood by the initiated, and symbols, but occasionally a piece of Buddhist philosophy is condensed into a *tanka*. Saigyō writes :

" Since well I know
That everything which seems
Real, is *not* so,
Must I not also know
Dreams are not dreams ? "
(Trans. : C. H. Page.)

The contrast between Christian and Eastern mystics is striking, for the Christian does not hesitate to ascribe his rapturous emotion to the Founder of his religion or to a personal God, and in his certainty introduces a finality unknown to the Buddhists. The joy and confidence of a Julian of Norwich, after her one clear revelation, are very different from Saigyō's sadness and uncertainty ; yet the one is not superior to the other. Saigyō, while never confessing that he had had a complete revelation, had inward assurance, and if it was not as joyful as that of the Lady Julian, who expected full enlightenment to follow the end of her earthly life, it was deeper and stronger in that Saigyō, as taught

by his religion, could not look forward to death as the gateway to complete knowledge. The opinion has been expressed in Japan that a Christian cannot have true mystic experience because he knows too much, is too certain of the nearness and the nature of his goal. Saigyō's longing was for something which it would have been presumptuous to believe close at hand, but to be reached at last after patient renunciation of pleasant delusions, and the getting rid of wrong desires:

"The changeful moon dropped suddenly
Behind the westward hills to-night.
Ah! Would that I might follow it, and see
The eternal light!"

(Trans.: C. H. Page.[1])

[1] This *tanka* in translation reads almost the same as the one by Minamoto no Suehiro quoted on page 56, but the Japanese originals are quite different in their wording. Saigyō's is:

"Yama no ha ni
Kakururu tsuki wo
Nagamureba
Ware mo kokoro no
Nishi ni iru kana."

And Suehiro's is:

"Tsuki kage wa
Iru yama no ha mo
Tsurakariki
Taenu hikari wo
Miru yoshimo gana."

Many writers of *tanka* have expressed this idea: the setting moon, symbol of Buddhist faith, in its beauty makes them long to follow it or retain it so that they may prolong the inner experience it induces.

Saigyō's life and poetry are an illustration of the ideas and feelings which Nature-mystics of all countries have in common, with the exception that he does not acknowledge any ecstatic vision, and somewhat mistrusts his strong attachment to earthly beauty. He was "one with Nature," and in natural objects found symbols of his spiritual desires, but gently protests, as in the *tanka* on page 41, at not being able to withdraw himself entirely from the things of the earth. In solitude his mind became his kingdom; he realized his separation from beauty, and was sad; and to his heart there came strange happiness and knowledge which were incommunicable to his fellows. Other poets of Old Japan have written of moments of transcendent emotion, but Saigyō is the only one before Bashō [1] whose inspiration seems to have been constant and the ruling motive of his life.

Kamo Chōmei (1154–1216) is typical of those who, convinced of the unsatisfying nature of a life spent amongst struggling men, in which misfortunes occur so often, and in which the rewards are so few, turn to a much simpler state of existence, not so much renouncing the pleasures of the world as escaping from its trials. A man of brilliant talents, and holding office at court, he seems to have been bitterly disappointed at not receiving an expected promotion, and when

[1] See page 96.

about thirty-five years of age became a Buddhist monk. Later, when past fifty, he retired to the mountains to lead the contemplative life of a hermit, and though at the earnest request of the Shōgun he went to Kamakura for a time, it was not long before he was once more in his hut amongst the hills. Here he wrote the "Hōjōki" ("record of ten feet square") in 1212.

This is a short work, and half of it is taken up with an account of "strange events" he had witnessed in his life, including a terrible earthquake, a famine, a typhoon, and a pestilence. He had evidence enough of the uncertainty of life, and wondered what place to go to and how to occupy himself in order to secure a few brief years of peace in this world. He relates how he finally built himself a hut ten feet square and seven feet high, and settled down contentedly to live with Nature.

It has been pointed out that in many ways he resembles Thoreau. In the "Hōjōki" there is the same delight in living in the simplest possible manner, and in describing the surroundings, the same real joy and contentment in the peace and serenity of the life, as is found in *Walden*, though Chōmei's work is on a much smaller scale. He also invites comparison with Wordsworth. J. M. Dixon prefaced his translation of the "Hōjōki"[1] with a short essay: "Chōmei

[1] In *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, 1892.

and Wordsworth : A Literary Parallel." In this Chōmei is given scant praise—" Wordsworth's life among the hills was a life of yearly expansion : Chōmei's was confessedly spent in a contraction that was finally to end in absorption with the Infinite." The writer throughout seems prejudiced against Buddhist ideals. What he calls " contraction " was rather a purification, a throwing off of all hindrances to spiritual advancement. It is no reproach to Chōmei that he " refrains from all attempts to proselytize."

Chōmei had an eye for detail, and in the true Japanese manner watched the seasons round. " In spring I behold the thickly-growing glycins [1] in purple clouds giving forth their perfume to the west. In summer I listen to the cuckoo, whose call invites me to set out on my journey to Shide Mountain.[2] In autumn my ears are filled with the song of the cicada, which seems like a lamentation over this life, as empty as the skin it has cast off. And in winter I love the snow, which gathers in heaps, then melts away, like the sins of mankind."

He goes on to describe how, when weary of prayer or reading the scriptures, he rests as the mood takes him, with no one to interfere, and

[1] A kind of bean, one of the " five grains " of Japan. It has a flower not unlike the wistaria.

[2] Shide is a mountain which the dead must cross. The cuckoo is often looked upon as the announcer of death.

no one to whom he need excuse himself. Although he has made no vow of silence, he is perforce silent because usually alone; and although he has no monastic rules to follow, his circumstances give him no opportunity of breaking the commandments. At times he plays on the lute, with the wind in the pines as accompaniment for one piece, and the murmuring of a stream for another. Confessing that he had no talent, he nevertheless found solace in his simple tunes.

At the foot of the mountain lived a forester, whose sixteen-year-old son proved a congenial companion for Chōmei, and they went for long walks together, in spite of the difference of age enjoying the same things. Chōmei describes the round they made, mentioning the flowers they gathered, and the long views from the top of the mountain:

"Beautiful landscapes have no master, and there is nothing to forbid one to feast one's eyes. Without the fatigue of a journey, when my thoughts carry me afar, I follow the line of the mountains. . . . I pray at the temple of Iwama or worship at Ishiyama."

The moon, the fire-flies, the rain at dawn, and the cry of the pheasant all have a special meaning for him. The crying of the monkeys—always full of sadness to the Japanese—brought tears to his eyes, and the mountain-deer, which

approached him fearlessly, made him realize how far he was from the world. He sums up his impressions of his surroundings :

" These beauties of the mountain are without end, and men who meditate profoundly will find in them still more."

Although he had looked upon his hut from the first as but a temporary dwelling, he finds that he has spent five years in it. Fire, the scourge of Japan, which has destroyed many buildings in the capital, has left it untouched. He hears of the death of many well-known people, and reflects that even greater numbers of the poorer sort must have died ; but he himself still lives, loving his loneliness. As the sea-eagle dwells on solitary shores because it fears man, so he remains aloof in the mountain, knowing himself and knowing the world, and unwilling to venture into a society which would destroy his peace of mind. He confesses that in the present state of the world he cannot put confidence in men—not even in a servant. He prefers to be his own servant. Friends are self-seeking, attaching themselves to those who are wealthy and generous :

" It is better to have as friends my harp and my flute, the moon and the flowers."

As regards food and clothing, he lives most simply, careless of appearances, and compares his past life with the present. Fear and envy

he knows no more, and he can confidently yield to divine judgment, having freed himself from all wrong desires. His being is like a floating cloud, he neither loves his existence nor despises it; a gentle sleep is his joy, and all the hope of his life centres in the beauties of the seasons.

Then, at the close of his brief account, after admitting his delight in the life of retirement from men but of closer communion with Nature, he tells of religious scruples. He remembers that, as a Buddhist, he should in no wise attach himself to the things of this world, beautiful though they be. Even his love for his humble hut and his quiet rest may be obstacles to spiritual illumination. He may be losing precious time while rejoicing in useless pleasures:

"On a peaceful morning I have meditated for a long time and asked myself: 'You have given up the world, you have made intimate friends of the mountains and forests for the satisfaction of your soul, to follow the Way of Buddha. But while you have every outward appearance of saintliness, your heart remains steeped in impurity. . . . Is it your poverty which afflicts you, or your own gloomy heart?' There has been no reply from my heart; only my tongue has recited two or three times, of itself, the invocation to Buddha. And that is all."

A fitting *tanka*, but by another hand, has been added by an editor :

" The moon disappears behind the mountain. How sad it is ! How I long for the light eternal ! "

This verse, by Minamoto no Suehiro,[1] aptly expresses the yearning of Chōmei's heart—his craving to pierce the horizon and gaze into the beyond. Whether he ever experienced that ascension of the spirit which would have made him one with the hills and the streams and the autumn-tinted foliage which he worshipped, we are not told ; but his short account reveals the " I stood tip-toe " spirit in which Keats lived, ready to ascend into worlds unknown. A man who, to appease his soul, makes intimate friends of the mountains and forests, and who claims that their beauties have no end, but to him who meditates upon them are multiplied beyond what the senses can discern, is treading in the path that leads to revelation. Unfortunately Chōmei, while yielding himself to the influences at work upon him, had not learned to connect the cause of his joy in Nature with the cause of the consolation religion afforded him. The ladder from earth to heaven remained invisible. One thing seems certain, however. Although as a scholar and a Buddhist he may have deliberately avoided any approach to ecstasy of feeling,

[1] See note, page 49.

knowing that the Buddha regarded such as unnecessary in the progress towards Arhatship, he did gain emancipation in the Buddhist sense. He had rid himself of all cravings—for wealth and position and the pleasures of the world of men. No passion remained, and, whether he had travelled strictly along the eightfold way or not, he had come near to the journey's end.

In estimating the literary achievement of Chōmei one has to bear in mind that even in prose the Japanese are frequently reticent. There is an elusive quality in the writing, a suggestion of many things left unsaid, a shrinking from full revealing. Chōmei perhaps, like Gray, "never spoke out," and when he drew attention to the many beauties of the mountains, and remarked that he who reflected deeply might discover yet more beauties, he left these visions of the spirit, of which he was not ignorant, for the reader to ponder. When he declares that all the hope of his life is in the beauties of the seasons, we are urged, accustomed as we are to the introspection of Wordsworth or the outspokenness of Traherne, to ask why and how; but the answer is left to the unspoken thoughts and that knowledge which is born of intuition. Japanese readers understand, and are well content.

Chōmei composed a considerable amount of verse, which deals with much the same ideas

as are found in the "Hōjōki" without shedding further light on his experiences. The following example, which is typical, will illustrate this:

"Here, while I stand alone
Shadows mysterious thrown
By the dark mountain pines
Lie at my feet.
At the clear moon I gaze,
Muse in a thousand ways
On what my soul divines
Dimly of life."

(Trans.: Clara A. Walsh, in *The Master-singers of Japan*, page 102.)

Yoshida Kaneyoshi (1283–1350) came of a noble family, and served at court, but on the death of his protector and patron, the Ex-Emperor Go-Uda, in 1324, he became a monk, and took the name of Kenkō. His sincerity in joining the priesthood has been doubted, the suggestion being made that he was merely withdrawing out of reach of his enemies, and he has been accused of certain blameworthy actions; but while his writings show that he was of a cynical turn of mind, and that he had not separated himself entirely from the world, there is nothing to prove that he was morally weak. He reveals himself in the *Tsure-zure-gusa* (stories for tedious days), written about 1337–9, which is a miscellany of thoughts and ideas jotted down with very little attempt at arrangement, philological questions being discussed on the heels of the duty of

resignation, and notes on the position of the Mikado's bed preceding a few paragraphs on the desirability of knowing one's self. Throughout the work Kenkō shows the influence of older writers, and is constantly quoting from or referring to well-known passages of prose and poetry. He loved the "old, unhappy, far-off things," though perhaps he looked back with regret to the more recent time when he himself was in the midst of the glories and splendours of court life at Kyōto. In some ways, with his quaint remarks and outlook, and catalogues of what he admired or was interested in, he reminds us of Sir Thomas Browne. Aston compares the *Tsure-zure-gusa* to Selden's *Table Talk*. Although he lived a secluded life, he had not cut himself off from the affairs of men, and for this reason Kyusō[1] would not admit there was much good in him, pitying him for not knowing the Way of the (Chinese) Sages and thus becoming a Buddhist. He shows little of that detachment which is found in Chōmei, but, on the other hand, while he is sufficiently mixed up with human activities to be concerned about the correct way of mounting a horse or of flogging a criminal, he rises to greater heights of enthusiasm than Chōmei, and at times writes as passionately as a Japanese can of the emotion aroused in him by natural beauty.

[1] See page 113.

One of his most charming passages is a description of the changing beauties which the seasons bring, a rotation which most Japanese follow with the greatest interest, from the very early plum-blossom to the chrysanthemums, maples, and camellias of autumn. Like many another, he had watched the year go round, but he was the closest of observers, and the pleasures of memory were added to those of actual experience :

[1] "As the seasons change from time to time, our emotions are touched by each one of them.

"All will admit 'the pathos of life is deepest in autumn,' as indeed it is ; but a spring landscape, on the contrary, makes the heart particularly cheerful. The songs of the birds are a special feature of spring ; and as the plants in the hedges sprout anew in the general sunshine, little by little the season advances, the mists spread abroad, and the blossoms at last show themselves. But just then the rainy breezes come on and our hearts are distracted by the scattering of the petals ; sad indeed do we feel until the green leaves appear. The orange-blossom has a great reputation, but it is the perfume of the plum which sends our thoughts lovingly back to the days of old. The purity of the *kerria*[2] also, and the waving beauty of

[1] The extracts are taken from W. N. Porter's translation.

[2] Shrubs with long, slender, green branches and yellow flowers.

the wistaria—no one of all these can we banish from our thoughts.

"About the time of Buddha's birthday [1] and the Kamo Festival,[2] when the twigs are delightfully cool with an abundance of green leaves, 'tis said that our enjoyment of life and love of companionship are strongest, and so indeed they are. In the fifth month the roofs are covered with irises, the young rice shoots are transplanted, and the water-rails chirp. Does not this touch the heart? In the sixth month the pale evening gourds and the smoke rising from mosquito fires in humble cottages arouse our sympathies. In the sixth month, also, the Shintō services are very beautiful.

"Then how charming is the Tanabata festival![3] At last when the nights grow chilly comes the cry of the wild geese, and when the underleaves of the bush-clover colour, the early rice is cut and dried in the fields. Many are the charms like these in autumn; but how terrible is the morning after a hurricane!"

In this description Kenkō is obviously sincere in relating his own impressions, but he knows he is repeating in other words what had been said over and over again in Japanese literature, and he admits that he is only doing what had

[1] April 8th.
[2] April 15th. The Kamo Shrine is in Kyōto.
[3] July 7th.

been done in the Genji Monogatari and Makura no Sōshi. But he is not writing conventionally—"My feelings would suffocate me if I did not express them; so I let my pen run on. . . ."

And he continues: ". . . the bleak wintry landscape has a charm scarcely inferior to that of autumn. The crimson maple leaves lying scattered upon the grass at the lake-side covered in the morning by the whitest of hoar-frost, and the vapour rising from the water-pipes are very lovely."

"As the year draws to an end everybody is busy; it is the most affecting time of all. The sky, too, after the twentieth day of the month, with its cold, clear moon, which none cares to watch, is simply heart-breaking."

Kenkō seems to have felt the purifying effect of the sadness aroused in his heart by such scenes as the one last mentioned. He would yield himself unreservedly to the influence of the grey side of Nature until he could bear it no longer, and then fly back to the world once more, sympathetic rather than strong, perhaps not understanding what strange powers were calling to his spirit, and afraid to follow too far:

"Incomparably more touching than gazing at a spotless full moon in other far-distant lands is it to wait and watch till, when near daybreak, it appears solitary above the branches of the cedars in the wild mountains, to note the shadows

between the trees, and how all grows dim beneath the clustering clouds as gentle rain begins to fall. 'Tis then that the leaves of the oak-trees glistening in the wet pierce one to the heart, and make one long to get back to the capital and the society of one's friends."

But, while he delighted in human companionship, he believed that solitude was best, and he often refers to a man's need for that seclusion in which he may, by unremitting prayer and meditation, cleanse his heart from all impurities. It was good, he declared, merely to be alone, and he could not understand how anyone could be bored by living a physically inactive life.

"To my mind, even though you remain ignorant of the true Way, yet, if separated from the influence of the world, you spend your life in tranquillity, and if your heart, untroubled by business, is at ease, you will for the time being be happy."

Like all true Nature-lovers, Kenkō hated the thought of cruelty to animals, not merely on account of the Buddhist disapproval of taking life, but because he had a wide, embracing love for all living creatures. More than once he writes with tender feeling for birds, and even insects, and gives it as his opinion that those who make animals fight for sport are on a level with the "brute beasts which prey on one another."

There is one touch of Coleridgean "wonder"

in Kenkō's work—" Do we not feel how exceedingly charming and beautiful it is for the virgin Princess to dwell in the holy temple far out on the wild moors ? "—but there are several resemblances to Wordsworth. Aston quotes [1]—

> " The inward eye
> That is the bliss of solitude,"

in connection with Kenkō's claim that we can appreciate beauty at other times than when we actually see it, and that the spring and a moonlight night can be " very helpful and charming " to one when meditating indoors. In another place Kenkō says that " anything which has been used long ago and still remains unchanged, even though it is not living itself, touches one deeply." And again: " At the moment when something is said, or at some sight I see, or at some sensation I have, I feel that I have experienced it once long ago, though when it was I cannot tell. I wonder if it is really only I who have such feelings ? " These are surely akin to—

> " Those shadowy recollections,
> Which, be they what they may,
> Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
> Are yet a master light of all our seeing."

Further, just as Wordsworth broke with eighteenth-century convention, its " nature methodized " and its poetic diction, so Kenkō rejected with scorn the Japanese tendency to

[1] In *Japanese Literature*, page 196.

admire what has been admired, and what it is "correct" to admire. In Japan there has always been enthusiasm everywhere, real or artificial, for the tinted leaves of autumn, especially the crimson maple; but Kenkō says boldly that the new leaves of the maple in spring beat them all. Dwarf trees, stunted and twisted, have been the pride and delight of Japan for centuries, and one never hears a suggestion that they are anything but charming. The crippling of them is an art. Kenkō, however, applauds the sentiments of Suketomo Kyō, who, after seeing a crowd of deformed men and women about the temple gate, realized that his distorted trees were mere monstrosities, and dug them up and threw them away. "Thus should we, too, feel about these things." Beauty spoke to him in a language which he understood, and he was ready to accept its message, whatever the source. "The meanest flower that blows" was sufficient to open the gates of a new world, or, as he says himself, a waterfall, or a caressing breeze:

"In many cases it is helpful to gaze at the moon. But one man will say, 'Nothing else can ever be so beautiful!' while another will insist, 'The dew is far more emotional.' But that is rather an absurd discussion, for whatever suits the particular occasion touches the feelings most. 'Tis needless to speak of the moonlight

on the blossoms. A man's heart may be touched by the breeze alone; and in all seasons alike there is a charm in a landscape of clear flowing water breaking over rocks. . . . Keikō says that it delights the heart to watch the birds and fishes while we wander amid the hills and rivers. Will not our hearts, therefore, be cheered by a lonely ramble in places far from humanity where weeds grow in the pure water?"

Either from contemporary Zen[1] teaching, or his study of the doctrines of Taoism, Kenkō derived the idea that we should deliberately stop short of perfection, as though always to leave something ahead to strive after. This counsel is given so that man may guard against that particular form of self-satisfaction which results in cessation of effort. The ideal is Buddhahood, and those who seek Enlightenment need to remind themselves by the sight of imperfect forms around them that their task is not finished. The unsymmetrical is mentally and spiritually stimulating in that it compels the thought to create forms for itself or to carry to completion an unfinished design. Kenkō writes: "There are some who say that when a palace is being built, you should never fail to leave one little piece of it uncompleted." It may be that a beholder enjoys the mental irritation caused by the lack of finish, or the delight of imagining what has

[1] See page 71.

been omitted, just as we find the Venus de Milo ten times more attractive because we can fashion the lost portions in what way we will. With somewhat the same idea he remarks complacently that "a good craftsman always uses a knife which is the least little bit blunt," and that there is always a chapter or two missing in the good old books! Browning's verse in "Old Pictures in Florence" seems almost an echo of Kenkō:

> "'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven—
> The better! What's come to perfection perishes.
> Things learned on earth we shall practise in heaven;
> Work done least rapidly, Art most cherishes."

Of neither Chōmei nor Kenkō can it be said that he had a philosophy in the way that we speak of Browning's or Shelley's philosophy. Their ideas of life and death were those of the particular form of Buddhism in which they believed, but for both of them Nature had the same message, and they responded to it in the same way, hardly conscious of the purport of the message, knowing only that it stirred in them a strange unrest. They felt the wonder and the wild desire, they loved their communion with the beautiful, and lingered over it, but rarely or never connected it with what they worshipped in their religion. Kenkō belonged to the Tendai sect, and both he and Chōmei were doubtless familiar with Tendai and Shingon doctrines,

amongst which pantheism found a place; but neither writer claims that he "sees God in everything." That discovery was to be more widely known when Zen teaching spread. Shingon contemplation led to a vague absorption, as summed up in the phrase "*nyū ga, ga nyū*"—"(he) enters self, self enters (him)"—without any direct help from the external world. So far no Japanese writer in his description of Nature, although undoubtedly on the way to understanding, had attempted an interpretation. Wordsworth, after recounting his wonderful midnight vision of sea and mountains "In the clear presence of the full-orbed moon," asks himself what it all means, and finds—

> "The type
> Of a majestic intellect. . . .
> . . . the emblem of a mind
> That feeds upon infinity, that broods
> Over the dark abyss, intent to hear
> Its voices issuing forth to silent light
> In one continuous stream."

The authors of the Nō-plays[1] made the great discovery, but before them Buddhism had not succeeded in raising Japanese Nature-worship beyond a cult of the beautiful, in which men longed for deeper and fuller experience or insight, vaguely aware that there was much to be revealed, but just failing to unlock the mystery. However deeply moved these Japanese

[1] See page 82.

observers were, they seemed content to submit to the influence without seeking to penetrate to the cause. Their whole religious training was against it, for the type of Buddhism which ruled their lives did not invite its followers to comprehend Reality in a quick flash of intuition, although the Shingon sect taught that if certain laws were obeyed union with the Infinite was possible. Both Chōmei and Kenkō suspected that the flutterings of their hearts as they responded for a moment to the Voice that called them were but another of the many illusions which a Buddhist should avoid; but while Chōmei doubted and wondered, the more orthodox Kenkō taught that the old paths were the sure way to Salvation:

"In this life of illusions what can one do? All desires are sinful; and if they come into your heart you should realize that they are unruly feelings which will lead you astray, and give way to not a single one of them.

"If you at once cast them all aside and, free from action and all other impediments, follow the Way, then both for your body and mind you shall attain lasting peace."

This is excellent counsel, but the rather worldly tone of the *Tsure-zure-gusa* makes the reader suspect that Kenkō was simply repeating a lesson; he does not claim that he himself had put the theory into practice. Doubtless there

were many in Japan contemporary with and before the time of Kenkō who, by following the Way, had attained the lasting peace of which he had been taught, but they did not record their experiences. In Japanese literature before the end of the fourteenth century we have only the confessions of the Nature-lovers, not of the single-minded, meditating priests, who were probably the more successful practical mystics; but these confessions surely give evidence of a receptive and enquiring attitude which may be regarded as mystic in so far as it was a recognition of and a desire to comprehend the Reality underlying the universe. Real comprehension of Nature in the full mystic sense is shown in much of the later literature, which, with the Zen Buddhism which inspired it, is discussed in the following pages.

IV

ENLIGHTENMENT

(*a*) Zen

Of the many sects of Buddhism in Japan, it is Zen which has most strongly influenced literature, and, as it teaches practical mysticism in the religion of daily life, some brief account of it is necessary here. Professor Chamberlain says[1]: "I have been brought to believe that a thorough study of the influence of the mysticism of the Zen sect in Japan would bear out native tradition in its attribution of 'inner meanings,' not to Bashō's[2] writings merely, but to the writings and even the actions of many other men of that and previous periods." Certainly the Japanese commentators read into many poems a deeper significance than is apparent to the general reader, and some acquaintance with the tenets of Zen is of great assistance in any attempt to appreciate Japanese art and writing, especially after 1350.

The word "Zen" comes through the Chinese from the Sanskrit "dhyāna," meditation; but though meditation plays a great part in the life of a Zen disciple, it is only a means to an end. The central fact of all Buddhism is really Sakya Muni's Enlightenment; but this was obscured

[1] *Transactions A.S.J.*, Reprints, vol i, p. 113. [2] See p. 96.

by his immediate followers in teaching and writing, and in the later works of Buddhist scholars, who have given more attention to the various paths to Nirvana than to the all-important goal itself. Before the Buddha began his life as a religious teacher he had passed through a great experience, and before this experience had had preparation under two teachers. He became dissatisfied with their instruction, however, because it led to no practical result in the spiritual sense—they did not take him far enough. Ultimately Enlightenment came, largely owing to his own efforts. He saw into the nature of things, and became a Buddha.

Zen emphasizes the fact of the Enlightenment, and teaches that it may be gained, even as the Buddha gained it, in this world. Attention is drawn to his life on earth after the Enlightenment, for though it is recorded that he wished to pass on directly to Nirvana, he did not do so, but continued to live amongst his fellow-men, teaching and helping, and only withdrawing into seclusion occasionally for spiritual repose and refreshment. Therefore we, men even as the Buddha was, may follow his example.

There is some difference of opinion as to the origin of the Zen sect, but Bodhi-Dharma, the twenty-eighth patriarch after Sakya Muni, is said to have brought the practical idea of Enlightenment to China in A.D. 520. His ideas

did not make much headway at first; in fact, he seems only to have introduced a seed which took some time to germinate,[1] though there were two recognized schools of Zen about a hundred years after the coming of Bodhi-Dharma. It was under the sixth Chinese patriarch (reckoning Bodhi-Dharma as the first), Hui-nêng[2] (637–713), the founder of the Southern branch, that Zen became more widely known and practised, for this Southern type taught that Enlightenment came suddenly, and even unexpectedly, as against the Northern teaching that it was a gradual process. Zen seems to have been eminently suited to the Chinese mind, and to have combined well with Taoism. From China, Zen, particularly the Southern form, spread to Japan. A Zen priest is mentioned in the *Genji Monogatari* (c. 1000). In 1191 Yeisaizenji returned to Japan after a visit to China to study Southern Zen, and the Mongol invasion (thirteenth century) drove many Zen priests to take refuge in Japan. A Chinese, Tsu-yuan[3] (1226–86), arrived in Japan and founded one of the great Zen monasteries, the Engakuji, in 1284. The new teaching soon became popular, particularly with the upper classes and the military, for in comparison with the milder methods of the Tendai

[1] M. Pelliot's researches go to prove that the movement was not introduced from India, but developed in China.

[2] Japanese name: Yenō. [3] Japanese name: Bukkō.

and Shingon Buddhists, and their elaborately adorned temples, Zen offered a stern discipline and bare walls. To-day Zen finds large numbers of adherents among the educated and cultured Japanese.

It is on the practical side that Zen is most interesting. Bodhi-Dharma's original declaration, as summed up by a later writer, is translated by D. T. Suzuki [1] as—

" A special transmission outside the scriptures ;
No dependence upon words and letters ;
Direct pointing at the soul of man ;
Seeing into one's nature and the attainment of Buddhahood."

A seeker after Enlightenment (*satori* in Japanese) is taught to look within, to see into his own nature—his Buddha-nature—and not to rely upon written accounts or the experience of previous " adepts." His Experience is a personal matter : others cannot explain how he will attain it, and when it comes he cannot explain it to others. But he will understand all, and find peace. His teachers, however, will help him to such a state of mind as is most suitable for the inrush of Enlightenment, and will provide him with well-known " kō-ans " to solve. These are a special kind of problem or question given to a neophyte to meditate upon, and if he can discover their meaning, or grasp their import, he will be on the verge of Enlightenment. He must

[1] In *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, First Series, p. 163.

be pure in heart, concentrate his thoughts upon his kō-an, meditate profoundly, and in this way bring about a mental condition suitable to his special need. He will, if he acts according to his teachers' directions, and if he earnestly seeks the Truth, finally enter into a state of receptiveness—not a trance, but an extremely sensitive frame of mind. This may last for a very short time—a few seconds or some days—but if, while the disciple is in such a condition, he receives the right kind of shock, he will suddenly become enlightened. This Enlightenment thus comes like a burst of flame in a highly inflammable material. It is compared to an explosion, a sudden awakening, a bursting of straining bonds —a great advance from mere serenity of soul.

The cause of the awaking, the match to the gunpowder, is nearly always some trivial thing, perhaps a blow designedly dealt by a teacher, the dropping of a stone, the sight or perfume of a flower, a sharp sound, or an irritating touch on the flesh. Any one of these or other trivialities may, if the disciple's mind has reached the necessary pitch of concentration, bring about the desired result. It is like the dropping of a crystal into a super-saturated solution.

Literary records of such religious experience are in existence, but most of them are in Chinese, and so outside classical Japanese literature. There is a kind of verse known as *Tōki-no-ge*,

"the verse of mutual understanding"—between teacher and disciple—many of which seem as incomprehensible as passages taken at random from the symbolical writings of Blake. Others, again, are simple and straightforward, such as the following, by Iku, of Toryō (Tu-ling Yu) in the eleventh century:

"I have one jewel shining bright,
Long buried it was underneath worldly worries.
This morning the dusty veil is off, and restored is its lustre,
Illumining rivers and mountains and ten thousand things." [1]

There is a strange lack of what we may call direct Zen writing in Japanese, partly because Zen followers were not inclined to set down their experiences, being too occupied with their meditation and problem-solving, and partly because the traditional language for anything connected with Zen was Chinese. Of hint and allusion, and "inner meaning," however, there is abundance. One of the more outspoken efforts is an interesting prose work entitled *Orategama*, by a Zen master, Hakuin (1683–1768), which gives some details of his "seeing into his own nature." The title itself is somewhat of a mystery, having been variously interpreted, and being almost a kō-an in itself. One disciple maintained that it was a playful name given by Hakuin to his tea-kettle. The most striking passage is translated by D. T. Suzuki as follows [2]:

[1] Translated from the Chinese by D. T. Suzuki, in *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, First Series, p. 235. [2] Ibid., p. 238.

"When I was twenty-four years old I stayed at the Yegan monastery of Echigo. ['Jōshu's Mu'[1] being my theme at the time] I assiduously applied myself to it. I did not sleep . . . forgot both eating and lying down, when quite abruptly a great mental fixation took place. I felt as if freezing in an ice-field extending thousands of miles, and within myself there was a sense of utmost transparency. There was no going forward, no slipping backward. I was like an idiot, like an imbecile, and there was nothing but 'Jōshu's Mu.' Though I attended the lectures by the master, they sounded like a discussion going on somewhere in a distant hall, many yards away. Sometimes my sensation was that of one flying in the air. Several days passed in this state, when one evening a temple-bell struck which upset the whole thing. It was like smashing an ice-basin, or pulling down a house made of jade. When I suddenly awoke again, I found that I was Ganto (Yen-t'ou), the old master (828–87), and that all through the shifting changes of time not a bit [of my personality] was lost. Whatever doubts and indecisions I had before were completely dissolved like a piece of thawing ice. I called out loudly, 'How wondrous! How wondrous! There is no birth-and-death from which one has to escape, nor is there any supreme knowledge

[1] A famous kō-an.

(Bodhi) after which one has to strive. All the complications [i.e. kō-ans] past and present . . . are not worth the trouble of describing them.' "

Although it is claimed that the principle underlying Zen teaching was handed down outside the Buddhist Scriptures, the Lankāvatāra Sutra was recommended by Bodhi-Dharma to his first disciple as containing teaching closely related to that of Zen, and it has since been regarded as the Zen textbook, if not the authority. This sutra maintains that language is of little avail in explanation of the fact of Enlightenment, and so has helped to keep Zen a practical religion which has not lost itself in theorizing and dogmatizing. The masters teach by action rather than precept, arguing that if the Buddha himself could not give an account wholly intelligible to his followers, later disciples can hardly be expected to make the mystery clear. Everything is practical. The motto of the monasteries is " No working, no eating," and the disciples are kept busy with all kinds of useful tasks. Those who are successful in gaining Enlightenment do not become recluses, but like the Buddha go out into the world and take their part in it.

It may be asked what the results of Zen Enlightenment are. The answer given by a Zen master to such a question might well be a blow, not dealt in anger or contempt, but in a deliberate effort to bring about " satori " in the

questioner. We may gather, however, from such records as there are, and the explanations given by teachers and disciples, that the mental and spiritual revolution is similar to what we understand as full mystic experience in the West. The "enlightened" disciple "sees into his own nature," and understands the meaning of all creation. He comprehends the unity of all things, which—

> "Seem but parts to be
> Of one persistent harmony."

He is superior to other men because he has found, not the answer to his kō-ans, which he now knows are intrinsically worthless, but inexplicable satisfaction of soul. There is no mention of God, for the idea of God commonly implies personality and limitation, and in the Enlightenment there is no sense of union with any divine being, but with the All. But the idea of God held by Western mystics to-day approximates to the Zen Buddhist conception of what Illumination reveals.

The influence of Zen on the national thought is illustrated in literature by a change of attitude towards Nature. We have seen how from the earliest times the Japanese had yielded themselves to the attraction of natural beauty in a passionate adoration, which, while leading to self-submergence, did not bring full understanding of the attraction. But now, by the aid of a religion which pointed out that the Buddha-nature pervaded the universe, men and

animals, trees and flowers, sea and mountain, the whole heaven and earth, man was brought into closer and more sympathetic contact with his surroundings. The sadness of separation disappeared because the separation was no longer felt.

Always more a mode of life than a philosophy of life, Zen found expression in different directions, in painting, architecture, the tea-ceremony, flower-arrangement, archery, etc., with which the literature is not directly concerned except by occasional reference. The tea-ceremony is perhaps the most important of all, as it constitutes what may be described as the Zen communion. The custom is said to have originated in an early Southern Zen ritual in China, at which the disciples gathered in front of an image of Bodhi-Dharma and drank tea out of a bowl. The Yeisaizenji mentioned on page 73 introduced the custom to Japan at the end of the twelfth century, and the ceremony spread with Zen teaching until in the fifteenth century it was regularly practised in specially prepared rooms quite apart from temple worship. The ceremony itself is mystic in conception from beginning to end, starting with a purification from all worldly thoughts, and continuing with meditation upon beautiful things up to the final absorption of host and guests in an atmosphere of the utmost purity and refinement. The participants are assisted in their reflections by the arrangements of

the room, which follow Zen ideas—the utmost simplicity, for true greatness is found in what seems insignificant ; and the absence of repetition and symmetry, for true beauty can be created only by a mind which is allowed to complete a conception for itself. Thus the tea-ceremony became, and still remains amongst cultured people, the highest expression of religious ideals.

There is not much writing particularly dealing with the tea-ritual, but the following *tanka*, by Sen no Rikyū,[1] emphasize the spirituality of the ceremony, which does not depend on the quality of the vessels used :

" If we have naught but a kettle, we can celebrate the tea-ceremony. Yet there are some who ever insist on the regular utensils, which is foolish."

" If the kettle itself is wanting, use the hot water from the pot. Such may well be the best tea-ceremony of all."

Another poet, Gempaku,[2] insisted on the need for participating in the ceremony if it was to be understood :

" The lessons of the tea-ceremony are to be handed down by ears, eyes, and heart, and not by books."

And Mugaku Zenshi pointed to the close connexion of Zen and " tea " in the following :

[1] Executed in 1591, when seventy-three years old, at Hideyoshi's orders. [2] 1578–1658.

"Mark well that the taste of Zen and the taste of 'tea' are the same."

It has been the mission of Zen to mysticize the life rather than the literature of Japan, for the natural reserve and reticence of the Japanese have led them to do little more than give fleeting glimpses in their poetry of their deepest thoughts. The Nō-drama, however, is more outspoken where it is dealing with Zen ideas, though still uncommunicative except to the initiated. A few examples will be given in the next section.

(*b*) The Nō-plays[1]

A real understanding of the Nō-plays is beyond the range of all except those who can read them in the original and who, in addition, are thoroughly acquainted with preceding Japanese history, legend, literature, and religion; and even the scholars must fail in their attempts to penetrate the mysteries unless they can see the plays acted, and know the meaning of the words, the singing, and the dancing, and the whole tradition of the Nō-theatre. For one great feature of this art is the essential sympathy of the audience. The audience know the rules and share the secrets. If the best of the plays, even the most poetical from the Western point of view, were

[1] Quotations are from *The Nō-plays of Japan*, by Arthur Waley, except in the case of *Yamauba*, for which Mr. Yone Noguchi's version is used.

translated and performed before cultured foreign spectators, it is not probable that they would prove attractive. They might interest by their novelty, and the strangeness of the music and dancing, but their message would be lost. Amongst the Japanese themselves only a comparatively small number, those who cherish all that belongs to Old Japan—its life and art, poetry and story—take an intelligent delight in the plays. Mr. Waley points out [1] that as late as the beginning of the eighteenth century the Nō-drama was by no means wholly an esoteric cult, for there were special "popular" performances, but with the fixing of the type, and the withdrawal, as it were, into a world of old ideals, popular interest waned. The great actor families, however, handed on the traditions, and still "fit audience find, though few," of whom, it is said, the nobility and upper classes form a large part. They attend the theatre not for amusement or instruction, but to commune with the spirit of the past; this unique drama is almost a religion, with the actors as priests, who help the worshippers towards that uplifting of the heart which comes when one yields to the fascination of romance, or ponders the ideals of a by-gone age.

The religious beliefs, Buddhist and Shintō, of the period in which the plays [2] were written enter

[1] In the preface to *Nō-plays of Japan*, p. 38.

[2] About 800 plays are in existence of those written before the Meiji Era, some 250 of which are still performed.

into the composition of very many of them, and the Shintō influence has been fully worked out by Dr. Gundert in his *Der Shintoismus im Japanischen Nō-Drama*. Occasionally there is religious discussion on the stage, when the ideas of one Buddhist sect are opposed to those of another.[1] But while much prominence is given to the beliefs of the "Amida" sects, there is a strong Zen colouring, including ideas borrowed from Laotse, such as "*wa kō dō jin*"—"[The Tao] mitigates its light and joins the dust"—which Dr. Gundert points out as a phrase constantly recurring; and it is Zen mysticism which gives its peculiar character to much of the expression, both in words and in acting. In writing of Seami (1363–1444), who, with his father, was mainly responsible for Nō as it at present exists, Mr. Waley says[2]: "It is obvious that Seami was deeply imbued with the teachings of Zen. . . . The difficult term *yūgen*, which occurs constantly in the Works (treatises by Seami), is derived from Zen literature. It means 'what lies beneath the surface'; the subtle, as opposed to the obvious; the hint, as opposed to the statement. It is applied to the natural grace of a boy's movements, to the gentle restraint of a nobleman's speech and bearing. 'When notes fall sweetly and flutter delicately to the ear,' that is the *yūgen* of music. The symbol of

[1] E.g. in *Sotoba Komachi*. [2] *Nō-plays of Japan*, p. 21.

yūgen is a ' white bird with a flower in its beak.' ' To watch the sun sink behind a flower-clad hill, to wander on and on in a huge forest with no thought of return, to stand upon the shore and gaze after a boat that goes hid by far-off islands, to ponder on the journey of wild-geese seen and lost among the clouds '—such are the gates to *yūgen*." One recognizes here typical subjects of Japanese poetry, and learns something of the nature of the thoughts, as interpreted by Zen, underlying the brief verses.

One of the most charming plays is *Hatsu-yuki* (Early Snow), not especially mystical, but containing expressions which illustrate the Buddhist attitude towards life, with a wondering wistfulness to understand more fully, but at the same time a belief in the unity of existence. Hatsuyuki was the name of a beautiful white bird which belonged to the daughter of a Lord Abbot. A servant, going to its cage, finds that the bird has vanished, and her mistress is prostrated with grief when she hears the news. There is much mournful dancing and chanting, but the lady refuses to be comforted until she is reminded that there is hope of salvation even for a bird. " Noble ladies of the place " are summoned and they join in earnest and continued appeal to Buddha—

" *Namu Amida Butsu*
Namu Nyorai."

At last a speck is seen in the sky—

> "With pure white wings beating the air
> The Snow-bird comes!"

For a while it hovers, and the Chorus describe how, by the merit of prayer and song, it was reborn in Paradise to a life of perpetual bliss:

> "A little while he flutters;
> Flutters a little while and then is gone,
> We know not where."

There is more of direct Buddhist doctrine, mingled with filial piety and Nature-mysticism in *Hōkazō* (The Hōka Priests), the story of two brothers, one of them a priest, who disguised themselves and set out to take vengeance on the murderer of their father. The murderer had become interested in Zen, and, in order not to arouse his suspicions, the brothers discuss certain points of doctrine with him. Answering the question "What is the meaning of this word 'Zen?'" one replies: "Within, to sound to their depths the waters of Mystery; Without, to wander at will through the portals of concentration." And again, in reply to "And of the doctrine that Buddha is in the bones of each one of us . . .?" the other brother answers: "He lurks unseen; like the golden dragon [the sun] when he leaps behind the clouds." A little later there is a fine lyrical passage by the Chorus, which indicates in clear language what

lies behind earthly beauty, the kind of direct statement all too rare in Japanese poetry, but which helps to remove much of the obscurity which one finds in a superficial reading of later *hokku :*

" On mornings of green spring
When at the valley's shining gate
First melt the hawthorn-warbler's frozen tears,
Or when by singing foam
Of snow-fed waters echoes the discourse
Of neighbourly frogs ; then speaks
The voice of Buddha's heart.
Autumn, by eyes unseen,
Is heard in the wind's anger ;
And the clash of river-reeds, the clamorous descent
Of wild-geese searching
The home-field's face,
Clouds shaped like leaves of rice—all these
To watchful eyes foretell the evening storm.
He who has seen upon a mountain-side
Stock-still beneath the moon
The young deer stand in longing for his mate,
That man may read the writing, and forget
The finger on the page."

" In the wind of the hill-top, in the valley's song,
In the film of night, in the mist of the morning
Is it proclaimed that Thought alone
Was, Is, and Shall be.
(Brother) : As a cloud that hides the moon, so matter veils
(Chorus) : The face of Thought."

It is thus, by the help of Zen teaching, that the Japanese find in Nature all that their souls seek of joy, hope, consolation ; like George Meredith, who, though following a different Way, discovered that—

" She can lead us, only she,
Unto God's footstool, whither she reaches."

We now come to a play, *Hagoromo*, which rises to greater heights. It is best described in Swinburne's line as "Remembrance fallen from heaven." From the beginning of the play we are given the idea of a beauty beyond our grasp, as the two fishermen speak of the scene—

> ". . . On the pine-wood shore
> The countenance of Spring;
> Early mist close-clasped to the swell of the sea;
> In the plains of the sky a dim, loitering moon.
> Sweet sight, to gaze enticing
> Eyes even of us earth-cumbered
> Low souls, least for attaining
> Of high beauty nurtured."

It is a spring morning, and one fisherman, Hakuryō, lands "at the pine-wood of Mio" to notice immediately an ethereal presence. "Suddenly there is music in the sky, a rain of flowers, unearthly fragrance wafted on all sides." He finds a beautiful cloak hanging on a pine-tree, and is proceeding to take it home with him as treasure-trove when the owner appears, an angel, and pleads with him to restore "the robe of feathers." The fisherman, however, is obdurate at first, and refuses to give it up, with the result that the angel is in despair, knowing that she is doomed to dwell on earth.

> "On her coronet,
> Jewelled as with the dew of tears,
> The bright flowers drooped and faded."

She gazes upwards, but finds—

> "The cloudways are hid in mist,
> The path is lost";

and the Chorus lament with her, telling how she envies the clouds, the wild-geese, the swift sea-gulls, and the wind of spring. Finally Hakuryō relents, and is willing to restore the cloak, but upon a condition. He has heard that there are "dances that are danced in heaven," and he demands that the angel shall dance one now. She brightens at once—

> "Now I shall have wings and mount the sky again,
> And for thanksgiving I bequeath
> A dance of remembrance to the world,
> Fit for the princes of men."

But first she must have back her robe, without which she cannot dance. The human fisherman, mistrustful, would have the dance first, and then give back the robe, but receives the proud reproof:

> "Doubt is for mortals;
> In heaven is no deceit."

And so—

> "The heavenly lady puts on her garment,
> She dances the dance of the rainbow skirt, of the robe of feathers.
> The sky-robe flutters; it yields to the wind."

This is the wonderful moment of the play. It is the greatness of Nō-drama that it can induce deep feeling in an audience by suggestion, by the atmosphere of the play; and the pleasure, when the angel receives back her robe, is independent of spoken word or action. The preparation has been complete, and the audience brought

to that pitch of expectancy resembling the mental condition of a Zen disciple on the verge of "satori." The putting on of the divine robe, the visible assumption of divinity, breaks up the inertness, and the surcharged hearts of the beholders overflow in an active realization of the joy they have been awaiting. The Japanese are not quick to describe their emotions, being content with the experience, and seemingly having little desire to share it with others; but play-goers have confessed that at this point there seems to be an opening of the gates of another world, an echo of divine music. The pines take on a richer green, there is a strange softness in the air, all the harshness of earth vanishes—the waves break more gently, and the birds sing more sweetly. Glorious as the spring morning is, it shines more brightly, reflecting unearthly beauty. For a few minutes the watchers seem to "behold the land that is very far off," and lose themselves in a mystic blending of earth and heaven.

The angel dances more than one dance, while the Chorus sing the words, lyric praises of spring-time, and of mountains, moon, and islands. The beauty of earth is glorified—"Not heaven is here, but beauty of the wind and sky"—but it is not forgotten that the Japanese are the children of the gods, and that heaven still lies about them. "She has danced many dances—

dances of the East," and the time arrives for her departure. "Robed in sky, in the empty blue of heaven . . .; in a garment of mist, of spring mist, wonderful in perfume and colour," she ascends—

"Over the pine-woods of Mio
Past the Floating Islands, through the feet of the clouds she flies,
Over the mountain of Ashitaka, the high peak of Fuji,
Very faint her form,
Mingled with the mists of heaven;
Now lost to sight."

Hagoromo is typically Zen in that it produces its effects more by actions than words. It may be compared with *Yamauba*, in which Nature-mysticism is more consciously mingled with and ennobled by Buddhism, and in which the mystic way seems to be deliberately followed. There is first the world itself, then the entry into a preparatory state where purification of thought takes place, the announcement of the coming—the precise moment—of illumination, and finally acknowledgment of the height reached. The symbolism reminds one of the myth-making qualities of *Prometheus Unbound*. The action begins on an ordinary level, with the pilgrimage of a famous singer, Hyakwa Yamauba, and her servant, who "seek a temple for its blessed shadow of light," the Zenkōji. The singer is named "Yamauba" because she has constantly sung of Yamauba, a mountain spirit, though who

or what this spirit really is remains a mystery. The capital is left far behind, and a solitude is reached where the singer wonders which way to take; but she remembers that "the Agero mountain pass is the only one straight road leading to the Zenkōji" and finally to "a Western Pure Land a billion miles away." She and her servant leave their palanquins here, and venture forward. At once the strangeness of the place makes itself felt, for darkness falls, and an old woman greets them. She proves to be the real Yamauba, who has caused the early darkness, and who now offers the travellers the shelter of her hut: for she wishes to hear the song about herself, which she knows describes her falsely. But they are to wait for the moonlight, when Yamauba will appear to them again in her true form, and dance for them. For a while she hides away in the clouds.

The second half of the play is full of imagination and wonder. Yamauba appears. She describes the "nocturnal ghostliness"—"There a maddened spirit beats his own corpse in a cold forest, and with tears repents over the sins of his previous life"; "Here a glad angel offers flowers to her own corpse in a deep field, and with smiles delights in the worthy acts of her former life." And she moralizes a little in Buddhist fashion, asking if wrong and right are not after all the same. What has one to repent, or what has one

to delight in? In the true Japanese manner she turns at once to Nature—"Go to Nature. Learn there a lesson of true perception! The waterfall rushes down, and the rocks are steep. Lo, mountain over mountain! What sculptor carved such a wonderful shape of green granite? Lo, water on water! What dyer dyed such a pleasing colour of blue brocade?" Her face appears fearful in the shadows, and the singer is terrified; but Yamauba urges her to sing. The transfiguration is at hand. "The lovely moment of the spring like this night is valued beyond price. There is a fragrance in the flowers; a shadow with the moon. Do not idle away these precious spring moments!" And the song is sung, with the throbbing waterfall for a drum, and the flutes the wind in the pines, while "the dark ghost wanders round the mountain." The emotion reaches its highest pitch, and there is described that mystic union which one learns to look for, and which the audience believe they feel, in the best Nō-plays.

"The mountain rising first from a speck of dust will thrust itself through the clouds. . . ."

"The boundless sea . . . nestles the moon tranquil in her heart; the deep pine forests behind will scatter away life's delusive dream with a wand of magic wind."

"Here in the empty valley is no voice to be heard; here are only the fire-flies on wings. No

echoes run from tree to tree, no bird is alarmed."

Such an exalted state of feeling forces the soul to reach out to grasp the truth. "The peak of Hōshō no Mine Mountain makes one aspire toward a peak of Nirvana; the bottomless depth of the Mumyo Valley makes one lament over the bottomless delusion of human life."

And what is Yamauba, ever wandering, ever lost, ever seeking to escape? She is Life itself, "restless in the human delusion." She embraces Buddha and man, perception and deception, and in the mystery of it all what have we as a sure foundation? There is Nature. "Behold the willow leaves so green, the flowers so red! Be true, like Nature herself!" Yamauba must wander on through the seasons, "running up the rocks," "dashing down the valley"; she "wanders, and now away disappears." The play ends, leaving us uncertain of all save that "Beauty is Truth; Truth, Beauty."

When Shintō beliefs and ideas form the basis of the drama rather similar results are achieved, but the success is probably due in large measure to the direction which Zen has given to the thoughts and feelings of the audience. The emotion rises to a height where, words being no longer adequate, it must be expressed by a dance, and in "Kamo" and "Tatsuta" (translated by Dr. Gundert) we have evidence that the Japanese

ideas of exaltation, of the power of the mind or soul to soar into the world of the spirit, while centred for the time being on beliefs held before the introduction of Buddhism, have been led to their highest point by the later teaching. *Chikubushima*, a play in which the influence of the "compromise" religion—Ryōbu Shintō—is seen, differs little from the others in the effect it produces.

These plays, the highest form of Japanese literature, which defy representation except in their own element, and the value of which it is difficult to assess by any English standard, might possibly serve to us as new models. In England, perhaps the time most suited for the appearance of similar work has passed. Religious ideals were ripe when the Miracle-plays were written, but men had not behind them a thousand years of one civilization; there had been too many interruptions. In Japan, where the people have always had a genius for absorbing or moulding to their own pattern the best features of an alien culture, where there had been no conquest and no change of race in historic times, it was natural that there should be some crystallization of the national spirit in a form of art. Japanese visitors to Europe return disappointed with grand opera, in which they expect to find the Western counterpart of Nō. They find epic and religious ideas, but there is something wanting. And that is *yūgen*.

(*c*) The School of Bashō

In the seventeenth century poetry was born again, and shed part of the old husk of convention which had overgrown the *tanka*; but it is disappointing, after the unrestricted outpouring of emotion in the Nō-drama, to find verse shackled in even smaller compass than the single stanzas of thirty-one syllables. A new form, the *hokku*, *haikai*, or *haiku*, consisting of three lines, 5,7,5, or seventeen syllables in all, arose in the sixteenth century, and gradually became popular, partly because poets were allowed in this metre a wider range of vocabulary and subject. Further, owing to the dissemination of Zen æsthetic ideals, beautiful things were once more appreciated because they were beautiful, not because it was the fashion to admire them, and poets vied with each other in calling attention to what had not been previously noticed. Natural beauty remained, as in earlier times, the principal subject of poetry, but the old grooves were followed less closely, and writers showed a more delicate perception, though it has to be admitted that at times the best of them were content merely to observe. Dr. Wainwright quotes [1] (and translates) a modern Japanese critic as saying: "Poetic forms, difficult for Westerners to understand, the so-called daintiness and elegance,

[1] In *Transactions A.S.J.*, Second Series, vol. ii, p. 39.

were prized, and there was a certain new discovery of the world of mountains and rivers, plants and trees, flowers and birds, winds and the moon. Even in our own times of degenerate tastes, the Japanese, strange to say, are capable of exquisite appreciation of Nature impossible to Western perceptions; an appreciation, for example, of the voices of insects under the light of the moon, of age-old mosses clinging to stones, and of the taste of *sake* in the presence of a snow scene."

The movement came to full fruition in the work of Matsura Bashō (1644–94), who was pre-eminent amongst writers of *hokku*. He was a *Samurai* by birth, but at the age of sixteen, owing to the death of his young lord and teacher, whom he deeply loved, he broke away from the routine of the life at a *Daimyō's* court, and devoted himself to meditation and teaching. Much of his time was spent in wandering about the country with his disciples, and to a large extent he made poetry the medium of his instruction. Revon says of him[1]: " . . . L'idée directrice de sa vie était fixée; soit qu'il promenât ses méditations dans les montagnes des environs de Kyōto, soit qu'il allât compléter son instruction auprès des plus grands savants d'Edo, soit qu'il voyageât pour étudier le grand livre de la nature, il fut toujours un mystique épris d'humilité, de pauvreté, de bonté universelle; il eut con-

[1] *Anthologie de la Littérature Japonaise*, p. 385.

stamment pour idéal d'amener les hommes à la haute morale qu'il avait atteinte ; et comme il était né poète, il fit de la forme d'art la plus exquise, c'est-à-dire de l'épigramme, le moyen pratique d'exercer, mieux que par de lourds écrits, l'influence qu'il avait rêvée."

Limited though he was by the type of verse he used, he was much more than a "Shelley *manqué*." Few men, judged by their life and work, have shown themselves to be more wrapped up and intermingled in the sights and sounds and scents around them, or to have had a truer inner experience. The essayist previously mentioned as quoted by Wainwright says : [1] "From ancient times the mental attitude in the East has been known as *botsuga* and *bōga* (self-submergence and forgetfulness). Self is submerged into Nature. Embraced in its arms, the self takes flight in Nature's bosom. Man has completely detached himself from emotional self-consciousness, and Nature and man have become identified." This attitude is undoubtedly the ideal, but Bashō is probably the only poet of Japan who consistently lived it. In him, judged from the Western standpoint, Japanese poetry (of the stanza class) reached its loftiest level. As a mystic Saigyō ranks high, but he lacked Bashō's confidence. Saigyō was constantly wondering what the inward emotion signified,

[1] In *Transactions A.S.J.*, Second Series, vol. ii, p. 37.

whereas Bashō, an earnest adherent of the Zen sect, asked for no explanation. As a Christian mystic, "full of the Holy Ghost," is convinced of the divine origin of his ecstasies, so Bashō, knowing all that Zen Buddhism had to teach of Enlightenment, sought no further, but followed the Way as revealed to him, and tried to make intelligible to others the joy of his experiences.

His work is the nearest approach to a Romantic Revival in Japanese literature. He made no attempt to introduce new metres, but he took the comparatively new *hokku* form and infused into it a new life and spirit. For the first time one notices a full realization that man can sink himself in Nature, and in more than Nature—in a strange union with the origin of man and Nature. There is a reminder of what has been called "the ultimate mystical counsel"—"He that loveth his life shall lose it"—for Bashō's life was a renunciation of ordinary physical pleasure, and an acceptance of the greater happiness which comes to those who follow an ideal. He had the highest conception of poetry. It was not only hymn, prayer, and psalm, but invested with a dignity which made it synonymous with right conduct and religious aspiration, poetry and religion being firmly welded together. "That is not *hokku*" was his rebuke to any transgressor of his code.

The amount of commentary which these tiny

hokku have called forth is enormous, and is proof, at any rate, of the appeal they make to the Japanese mind. Western readers deplore their brevity, but admit that expansion could hardly add to the charm. Take Bashō's famous verse composed one perfect night when the moon was at full—

> " 'Twas the new moon's light. . . .
> Since then I have watched it, and waited. . . .
> And lo ! to-night ! "
>
> (Trans. : C. H. Page, in *J. Poetry.*)

There is no description of the glories of the moonlight, or the ineffable beauties of the landscape ; the poem goes to the other extreme, and, avoiding direct reference, indicates a wealth of meaning by a simple gesture. Yet the full significance overwhelmed Bashō's listeners, for a Japanese can feel deeply and experience a great joy without thinking about his sensations or striving to depict them. He realizes the futility of attempting an analysis of that for which we have no name, of trying to communicate the incommunicable. Sometimes, however, owing to excessive condensation and vagueness of allusion, the poems are as difficult as *kō-ans.* It is customary to read an inner meaning into most *hokku* by Bashō and his followers, and, as it is more than likely that Bashō, at any rate, spoke in parables, the moral interpretation is doubtless the correct one. Knowing his life and teaching, and the earnestness of his purpose, we may

be assured that his simple little pictures are meant to convey a message to the heart ready to receive it.

Still, it is not easy, merely from an examination of the seventeen-syllable epigrams, to give a detailed account of Bashō's beliefs or to analyse his mysticism. One has to be content with a glimpse here and there, often relying on the commentators for the heavenly meaning; and one regrets all the more that the traditions of Japanese poetry made it impossible to set down a train of thought, and forbade a poet "taught in Paradise" to unburden himself in full expression. His sympathy with Nature was so profound that he did not seek a communion which he had long experienced, or an absorption which he felt was already complete; but it pleased him to use natural scenes for figurative description of the sudden illumination which came, according to Zen teaching, to the contemplative mind which had reached the necessary degree of purity and quietude. Thus the well-known lines—

"Furu-ike ya
Kawazu tobi-komu
Mizu no oto."

"The old pond, aye, and the sound of a frog leaping into the water." (Trans.: Chamberlain.)[1]

are regarded as Bashō's record of a moment in which he made definite spiritual progress. There

[1] Chamberlain's translations are from *Transactions A.S.J.* Reprints, vol. i.

is the absolute tranquillity of the motionless water, and then, all at once, the disturbance—typical of the coming of *satori*. (To the Japanese mind there is nothing incongruous in the mention of a frog, a creature as poetical as a cuckoo or a nightingale.) His natural surroundings were symbols to him of his ideals of purity and truth, and he felt that complete contact with them cleansed him from all worldly stain—

> "Where the dews drop, there would I fain
> Essay to wash this frivolous world."
> (Trans.: Chamberlain).

It is an expression of longing for absolute purity, for the corruptible to put on incorruption. Any beautiful thing which he saw was an image to him of the desires, and at the same time the satisfaction, of his soul. Wainwright quotes [1]:

> "The mountain is cool,
> The moon in the water,
> The depth of my soul!"

and comments: "What he saw, we are to suppose, was a reflection of the mountain in the cool water, and the image of the moon below the mountain. This brought to his mind's view ultimate Reality, known as *Shinnyo* among the Buddhists, hidden in the soul of man. The three lines, therefore, are suggestive of ultimate things."

Again, what is on the surface a simple piece of observation, can in most cases be read as a

[1] In *Transactions A.S.J.*, Second Series, vol ii, p. 49.

reference to some Buddhist practice, idea, or belief, as in—

" A cuckoo, being lost to view, as it flies towards a lonely island,"

where Bashō has in mind the concentration upon and the mingling of self in some natural object, which will induce a state of complete spiritual detachment from the material world.

But though at times he seems to acquiesce in an almost languid submergence, at others he apparently recognizes " a motion and a spirit " separate from himself—

" Like the presence of someone unknown is this spring morning to me."

(Trans. : Wainwright.[1])

His sense of kinship with Nature he expresses in many ways, but especially by his abhorrence of cruelty in any form. He implored the sparrows not to devour the bees amongst the flowers, and warns a toad to escape from a dangerous place. One of his followers, admiring the flashing dragon-flies, quickly composed a *hokku*—

" A red dragon-fly ! Strip off his wings, and lo ! a pepper-pod ! "

Bashō declared this was not *hokku*. It should be thought of the other way round—" A pepper-pod ! Add wings, and lo ! a red dragon-fly ! " He shrank from any kind of excess, preferring

[1] In *Transactions A.S.J.*, Second Series, vol. ii, p. 50.

even a beauty which reveals itself as from behind a veil, and withdraws again—

> " Oh ! the moon-gazing where some clouds
> From time to time repose the eye ! "
> (Trans. : Chamberlain.)

The inevitable comparison with Wordsworth has often been made, and it is more justified than in the case of other Japanese writers, for Bashō was most certainly in close spiritual contact with Nature, and was in no doubt as to the source of his uplifting. He is on much firmer ground than Kenkō or Chōmei, who seem to have been too timid to yield themselves till they were—

> " Lost, and in that Beauty furled
> Which penetrates and clasps and fills the world."

Moreover, almost everything Bashō said or wrote had moral significance, and his work, allowing for differences of language and form, may be compared with Wordsworth's best. But perhaps nothing brings out more strongly the difference between Japanese and English ideas of poetry than a consideration of the work of Wordsworth as a whole by the side of Bashō's brief thoughts, which are hardly more than exclamations, but which are, each one, truly the result of an access of feeling. Japanese poetry can be barren indeed when it is conventional, but Bashō avoided the more familiar subjects, composing nothing on Fuji San or the cherries

of Yoshino, and even after seeing Matsushima he declared that he had nothing new to say.

The depth and sincerity of feeling in Bashō are less noticeable in his disciples and imitators, of whom there were many; but here and there one finds a reflection of his teaching. Ransetsu (1654–1707), with his—

> " Yellow chrysanthemums, white chrysanthemums—
> Would there were no more names than these ! "
> (Trans. : Chamberlain),

shows his dislike of departure from simplicity and purity, and there is a suggestion of sudden illumination in a verse by Onitsura (1661–1738)—

> " Without a word of warning, there
> In the autumn sky, Mount Fuji stands."
> (Trans. : Chamberlain.)

This poet is worthy of comparison with Bashō in that he had a noble conception of poetry, declaring that " Though the words may be light, the inner meaning must be serious." The desire to lose one's self in Nature or in some natural object is often expressed, as in Ryōta's [1]—

> " Oh ! moon, if born again, I'd be
> A pine-tree on a mountain peak."
> (Trans. : Chamberlain.)

Many of the contemporary and later poems show a close observation of Nature, a love of beauty, a sense of fellowship with animals and insects, and a delicate perception of the charm of flowers

[1] 1719–87.

and birds. In Kaga no Chiyo (1703–1775), who had lost husband and child, a note of intense human suffering is sounded, and her little verses are full of tenderness. It was she who went to beg water rather than disturb the morning-glory which had entwined itself about her well-bucket. But the joy of life, and the passion, had departed, and she found no consolation except in the Eastern idea that happiness is a delusion—

> " All things that seem
> Are but one dreamer's dream."
> (Trans. : Page.)

A reader of *hokku* notices at once echoes, as it were, of passages of English poetry, as though the Japanese poets were reaching out to fuller expression, starting to work out an idea, but giving only the first link in the chain. Bashō's

> " Just past its full, how easily the moon
> Climbs through the clouds ! How soon,
> Alas ! it wanes "
> (Trans. : Page),

reminds one of the opening line of Sidney's sonnet ; and the same poet's—

> " Oh ! skylark for whose carolling
> The livelong day sufficeth not "
> (Trans. : Chamberlain),

makes one wonder whether, if he had given us all his thoughts on the joyous bird, he might have approached Shelley. Eastern and Western poets

see the same things, and are affected by them in the same way, but whereas the one is content to capture the momentary impression, the other uses it as a stepping-stone to more. Tennyson's little word-pictures resemble *hokku* in many ways; for example—

> " . . . A full-fed river winding slow
> By herds upon an endless plain,"

is the kind of observation, but with different objects and with no inner meaning, which a Japanese poet is constantly making. But while an Englishman could never regard these sixteen syllables as a poem, and would remain unsatisfied, a Japanese would be oppressed by the multitude of images which Tennyson crowds together in " The Palace of Art." Yet the poetry is the same for each. It is difference of training and temperament, and perhaps his enjoyment of the meaning below the surface, which makes the Japanese prefer one thought at a time. Thus Ryūbai [1] watches a butterfly, and notes—

> " Oh ! little butterfly, with wings
> Still moving even when it lights ! "
> (Trans. : Chamberlain),

and makes an end. Keats had observed equally closely—

> " A butterfly, with golden wings broad-parted,
> Nestling a rose, convulsed, as though it smarted
> With over-pleasure."

[1] Date unknown, but he belongs to this period.

but he added the richness of his imagination to what he saw, and his active mind moved forward to other ideas.

The impression one gains from a study of *hokku* is that they are a poor vehicle for the conveying of mystic thought, particularly when one remembers the freedom of the verse in the Nō-plays. There has been some attempt since the Meiji Restoration to introduce Western styles into Japanese poetry, but no innovator has met with conspicuous success. *Tanka* and *hokku* remain the popular forms, the old conventional subjects are treated with much ingenuity, and a high average of skill is maintained which must make the task of the judges in the official poetical contests a difficult one ; but even Zen ideas are dealt with by poets who know of them without being inspired by them. It is not likely that *furor poeticus* inflamed a Japanese poet in any period, though there have been many to " glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven," and sooner or later, in a country where the adoration of natural beauty is almost a religion, there is sure to arise a poet who will ride over conventions and prove to his readers that he has " seen a great light."

V

KAIBARA EKKEN AND MURO KYUSŌ

THE seventeenth century was a time of contrasts in the history of Japanese thought, for while Zen Buddhism was flourishing, with Bashō giving it expression in poetry, the "Kangakusha," students and teachers of Chinese philosophy, were proclaiming that it was wrong to seek to escape from the world in the manner adopted by most Buddhists. These reformers rediscovered Confucius and Mencius in the work of Chinese scholars, and devoted themselves to the exposition of their practical doctrines. Man was to fulfil his destiny by living in harmony with Nature, accepting what came as the will of Heaven, doing his duty according to the dictates of his conscience, and finding his happiness in obeying the divine law. There were two schools of thought, that of Chu Hi (1130–1200), and that of Wang Yang Ming (died 1528 or 1529); the former taught reliance on the "Sages," mistrusting man's power to reach a high level without their aid, whereas the latter declared that by intuition alone man might be guided to perfection. Chu Hi-ism, an ancient form of Positivism, became very popular in Japan, especially as one of the

scholars, Kaibara Ekken (1630–1714), made his teaching accessible to the people by writing in *kana* and easy Chinese characters. Wang Yang Ming's philosophy, though purely secular, in many ways resembled the tenets of Zen.

Ekken's works, even the *Onna Daigakku* (Great Learning for Women), a book on the whole duty of woman, with special emphasis on her submission to and unselfishness towards the opposite sex, make very dry reading on the whole, being little more than a series of moral precepts. He saw no good in Buddhism, and wrote : " He who follows Buddha is not only an undutiful son towards his fathers, but a sinner in the sight of Heaven and the Gods." [1] But as a Japanese he could not help yielding to the influence of Nature, which is independent of all religions, and in certain passages of his " Rakkun " (Philosophy of Pleasure) he shows a deeper and more sympathetic comprehension of the wonders of the universe than is found in his fellow sinologues.

He tells his readers that " In us all, whether wise or foolish, exists one harmonious spirit," and he calls this " the spirit of pleasure," by which he means true contentment of soul. This spirit dwells not only in man, but in animals, birds, fishes, and even plants, all of which by their behaviour show their consciousness of it.

[1] Extracts are from Ken Hoshino's translation of the " Rakkun " in *The Way of Contentment*. Publisher Murray.

It is only foolish man who is ignorant of its power. Just as our body must be nourished by food, so the spirit of pleasure must be fed, from Nature through the senses, for the pleasure is not stationary, but is constantly flowing out. Ekken's ideas remind us of

> " The one Spirit's plastic stress . . .
> . . . bursting in its beauty and its might
> From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light."

After enumerating many of the beauties—" the purity of snow, the smile of flowers "—which bring us joy, he points the practical moral: " To make ourselves conversant with this wonderful Nature is to expand our hearts, purify our feelings, arouse holy thoughts, and wash away all low and unclean desires. This is called inspiration, for the goodness which is within us is aroused, and flows out at the touch of the outer world." This pleasure is the great happiness of life and at the same time a safeguard against false pleasure, for it brings calm and peace and keeps out " that unrest which men miscall delight." He deplores the fact that men can have eyes and see not, can, like Coleridge, " see, not feel," how beautiful things are. " For such a one the spring has no glory, the autumn no beauty. His heart remains unmoved at the sight of moon and flowers." In his enthusiasm he comes near to preaching that from Nature all men may " take of the water of life freely,"

for he writes : " We can become the masters of mountains, water, moon, and flowers. We do not need to ask any man for them, neither to obtain them need we pay a single sen ; they have no specified owner. Those who can enjoy the beauty in the Heaven above and the Earth beneath need not envy the luxury of the rich, for they are richer than the richest." Such pleasures are " pure, and food for the mind." They continue without intermission, and cannot fail to uplift the heart of the wise man, until " with the wind he sings, while listening to the song of the birds."

Although as a Confucianist he despises all withdrawing into seclusion, he knows the delights of solitude, and does not hesitate to praise it. " Its serene joy is far superior to that of a noisy banquet." To ponder over past happy experiences is a great source of joy, he says, for the memory of pleasure is itself a pleasure, and is always with us. Further, to be alone when enjoying a beautiful scene adds to the pleasure ; if possible, one should be in the company of a friend with similar ideas, but it is better to have no one than a companion who does not understand ; and he quotes Saigyō—" The moon should be seen when [a man is] alone."

Ekken was more concerned with man's conduct in this world than with any means of satisfying the spirit, and the few ideas mentioned

here are an oasis in a desert of moral precept. But they are interesting, apart from their own value, because they illustrate the typical attitude of the Japanese mind towards Nature; no amount of Chinese doctrine could quite obscure the longing for fellowship with the "things unseen" behind the material facts which the senses are aware of, and though Ekken was not interested in a future life he seems to acknowledge the existence of a larger life than the present.

Muro Kyusō (1658–1734) was engrossed similarly with Chinese learning. His best-known work is his *Shundai Zatsuwa*, a miscellany of notes which he made of conversations with those who came to him for instruction and advice. Aston says that it contains nothing original, and that "the philosophy is simply that of Chu Hi in a Japanese garb"; but he quotes [1] the following paragraph:

"Although there is in heaven and earth a something infinitely quick of hearing and infinitely sharp of sight, independent of conditions of time or space, present as if actually on the spot, passing to and fro without any interval, embodying itself in all things which are, and filling the universe, it has neither form nor voice, and is therefore not cognizable by our senses. It is, however, sensible to the Real and the True. As it feels, so it responds. If there

[1] In *Japanese Literature*, p. 263.

is no truth or reality, there can be no response. If it did not feel, it would not respond. The response is therefore a proof of its existence. That which responds not, of course does not exist. What a wonderful property for heaven and earth to possess ! "

This may be a restatement of a Chinese (Taoist) idea, but Kyusō shows that he had gone to the root of the matter when he immediately adds the *tanka* composed by Saigyō at the Ise shrines—" What it is that dwelleth here," [1] etc. Kyusō was deeply impressed by Saigyō's life and character, and only lamented that the poet-priest had not had the privilege of knowing the Confucian doctrines. (He said the same of Kenkō.) Referring to the *tanka* in question, he says : [2] " Are not his tears from perception of truth ? Before the shrine he stands, single-hearted, direct, with truth ; and to his truth God also comes, and they commune, and so it is he weeps.

" As the reflection in clear water answers to the moon, and together moon and pool increase the light, so if continually in the one truth they are dissolved we cannot distinguish God and man, even as sky and water, water and sky, unite in one. . . . This is the revealing of God, the truth not to be concealed. Think not that

[1] See p. 46.

[2] Translated by Knox in vol. xxx, *Transactions A.S.J.*

God is distant, but seek him in the heart, for the heart is the House of God. Where there is no obstacle of lust, of one spirit with the God of Heaven and Earth there is this communion. But except by this communion there is not such a thing. Saigyō did not weep before he went to the shrine, and by this we know God came."

On one occasion, when questions were asked about different schools of thought, he answered in an orthodox yet tolerant way, and while not agreeing with the teachings of the "heretics" (followers of Wang Yang Ming) he admitted that there was no distinction between religions if they were based on Truth. "For the Way is from Heaven, and its source is one." He doubted Buddhism, Shintō, and the intuitionalism of Wang Yang Ming because they did not unite "outer and inner" or make "past and present one." It was only through studying the Sages that man could have a knowledge and realization that heaven and earth were one, and that the spirit of man was eternal.

"This 'feeling of response' of the gods is the thoroughfare of the spirit. If there is the least 'touch' of the spirit, though it show not in voice or face, the gods know it at once. But when in perfect quiet there is no mixture of the spirit the gods can find no place to enter in. This is the true nature, what I call the 'self.'

"Where, then, is this 'self'? It is before all thought, the reality of the unmoved. Superior men cherish it. Heaven and Earth are given rank by it, and by it all things are reared. From it 'feeling' goes to God, and there is nothing apart from it."

He proves time and again that, while condemning the Buddhists for their belief and practices, he had much in common with them. There is only one Way, and those who would enter into communion with God—Sage or Buddhist—must resist material attractions, give up their illusions, and cultivate a right attitude of mind and soul.

"Ordinary minds are ever moved by the undetermined thoughts and fancies with which they are filled. So they are led by spirits, enchained by things, and the 'self' cannot assert itself. We must nourish the source of 'self' if we would not lose it, and first of all by getting rid of lust. Without lust, in repose, and without plans or thought, from this empty quietness alone, in accord with right reason, does movement come. . . . This it is to command the gods and not be commanded by them. Without voice or odour it is the foundation of the empire, a formless body. Without thought or act it is the source of all."

He preached much more than the doing of virtuous deeds and the abandonment of evil,

claiming that the sinless man was only at the starting-point. "To forsake all evil and follow good is the beginning of the practice of our philosophy. Careless here, knowing good and evil only as shown in face and act, is to be too late. Struggle as we may, we shall not attain." But it was only by remembering the blessings they owed to parent, lord, and Sage that men could retain their "original nature," and advance towards fuller understanding of the "threefold mystery."

Chinese philosophy, however, even when expounded by Kyusō, who unconsciously informed it with much of his innate love of beauty, seems harsh and unattractive when contrasted with the richer doctrines of Buddhism or the nature-worship of the Japanese. We turn with relief to a passage where the philosopher is content to share in a joyous drinking of *sake* under the light of the moon, and let his emotions interpret themselves in the Japanese rather than the Chinese manner. He tells how, one autumn evening, when the wind was cool after the summer heat, and "after long absence" friends had gathered again at his house, he stopped them on the point of departure and begged them to stay with him and admire the moon. So they sat down and talked, and over the *sake* cups first one, then another, of the guests broke out in praise of the moon, quoting old Chinese

poems by Rihaku, until finally Kyusō himself recited :

" The men of to-day see not the moon of long ago :
The moon of to-day shines not upon the men of long ago :
The men of to-day and the men of long ago
Are like the flowing water.
All are alike as they see the moon,
With verse and wine their one desire is that
The moon shine long upon the metal cask."

They drank on " until the mountains seemed to fall," and then the host discoursed to his guests upon the significance of the moon's attraction, and the appeal it made to them :

" You all unite in praising the moon in verse and my heart is comforted as I see it. An emotion that ceases not arises, for the moon is the comfort of old age. I have many thoughts, and will give you one of them. When a child I was once sitting alone in the corner at the wine drinking on the fifteenth of the eighth month when a *samurai*, who was wholly illiterate, looked long at the moon and asked, ' How wide is it ? ' Then another like him said, ' It is cut off from something. How deep is it ? ' All who heard it ate their tongues, and even as a child I thought it absurd. But really, are most men so different, as they praise the moon for its clear light and love its pure reflection and meet together to eat, drink, and sing? And the poets ornament their verses as they see the moon and labour over their form, and yet, after all, æsthetic

as it all seems, they are merely amused with the appearance of the moon and know not its profound 'feeling.'

"What I said of 'the emotion that ceases not' refers to the love of the ancients, the study of their books as we know their hearts and the pain of separation from the world. It is the moon which lights generation after generation and now too shines in the sky. So we may call it the Memento of the Generations. As we look upon it and think of the things of old, we seem to see the reflection of the forms and faces of the past. Though the moon says not a word, yet it speaks. If we have forgotten, then it recalls the ages gone by. This verse of Rihaku is the best of all the poetry about the moon, for it lets the mere appearance go, and unites past and present in one spirit, all 'are like the flowing water.' Yet there is something wanting, for it does not speak of waiting for the coming age, and this is supplied in the ancient writing called *So*,—

> "'The men who are gone come not to me
> The men of the future hear me not,'

and as I read it my admiration knows no bounds. For this is Kushi's [1] thought: 'No one knows me, none of my own generation; and the men of the past who were one in heart with me, with

[1] Author of the couplet, about 314 B.C.

whom I would speak, are beyond my reach ; and the men of the coming age who will be of like spirit, hear me not and know me not.' So is it with everyone who has a heart : it is not Kushi only who thus laments. I too see the moon with such a spirit and mourn. The present is the past to the future, and in that age someone like me will grieve as he looks upon the moon."

All this was a wide departure for Kyusō from the practical Way he loved to teach—" Reason should be our life. Never should we separate from it," he declares—and he definitely despised Buddhist mystic contemplation. But, like Ekken, though he consistently tried to allow his intellect to guide him, he heard at times other voices, and listened to them awhile.

VI

CONCLUSION

NATIVE criticism of Japanese writings has reached a high level, and there has been much careful, painstaking research in connection with problems of language, dates, authorship, and what may be called the material side of literature. The higher aspects have not been neglected, and Japanese critics have studied the influences at work upon authors, the motives impelling them to compose verse, and the nature of the inspiration which the verse shows. Early critics like Tsurayuki knew of the urge to write, and throughout the centuries literary composition was attended with intelligent if not inspired discussion. The eighteenth century saw the rise of scholars with the "passion for knowing intimately," pre-eminent among whom was Motoöri Norinaga (1730–1801), who explained that men wrote poetry because they understood "the emotion of things." When reading Japanese interpretation of literature one has to remember that it is taken for granted that the reader is in fellowship with Nature: usually no explanation of this relationship, or its effects on the heart of man, is attempted. Man, being a part of Nature,

takes his place in it, and consequently is in full sympathy with his surroundings.

This sympathy, which accounts for nine-tenths of all poetical feeling in Japan, is credited to the capacity "*mono no aware wo shiru*"—"to know the Ah-ness of things," as Aston translates it, or "to penetrate the sadness of things," as the Japanese interpret it. This phrase is very fully discussed by Motoöri in his treatise on the nature of poetry entitled *Isono kami Shi-shuku-gen*, and the following is a brief synopsis :

"What is the motive underlying the composition of poetry ? It is the fact that men have an understanding of the emotion of things. Thinking of something in one's inner heart is such understanding. All creatures in the world have their respective emotion, and it is because they have it that they meditate when they meet with certain things. All animals have their own songs or poetry, but it is only man, leading a more complicated life than birds or beasts, and therefore being led to think more deeply, who has an understanding of the emotion of things. Our hearts move to and fro when we encounter anything complex, and it is the different movements of the heart which cause us to feel joy, sorrow, anger, pleasure, affection, etc. Thus we think in many ways according to the various causes which set our hearts in motion.

There are some men, like animals, of whom it

may be doubted whether they understand the emotion of things or not. But in reality they are not ignorant of it: it is only a difference of degree. Profound understanding produces poetry."

Motoöri then goes off into a philological dissertation on the exact meaning of *aware*, and with a great display of learning and copious quotation of ancient poetry sets forth that it means "sensibility of things," or "deep feeling in one's inner heart." The word, he says, was originally a mere exclamation when one was strongly affected by anything. It did not mean "to admire," and it was not the same as "Bravo!" But with the passage of time words change in meaning, and he admits that *aware* has come to include "compassion for what is seen." It is a "sighing" word, and he quotes a verse from Saigyō (among many others) in support.

"It is commonly thought that *aware* indicates only sorrow, but this is not true. *Aware* signifies all the emotions, such as pleasure and love, as well as sorrow. In novels, e.g. the *Ise Monogatari*, and in diaries, it may even refer to amusement. But this is a generalized sense. When we use the word seriously it is associated with sorrow or love, for these are the deepest emotions of the heart. Emotion is not profound in merely pleasant things. Anything which impresses the feelings strongly is *aware*."

Motoöri strangely says that a knowledge of the feeling must precede the feeling, and declares that one who is ignorant of *aware* cannot be moved at the sight of flowers or the moon. "One who knows the feeling of *aware* is called a sensitive man, and one who does not is called insensitive." He quotes Saigyō to support this contention—

"When in autumn, at evening time, he sees the snipe fly away from the dreary marsh, even a man whose heart is not easily moved is compelled to feel *aware*." [1]

"It is written in the *Ise Monogatari* that a long time ago there lived a man who talked about nothing but women. He was, like other men, not made of metal or wood, so we may imagine how sick he was with longing. At length he came to feel the emotion of *aware*, . . ." etc. "The author of the *Kagerō-nikki* points out that if worthless minds can be brought to think like that, how much rarer should the experience of brighter minds be."

Why are verses composed? Motoöri, after quoting Tsurayuki, says that to compose a poem is to give proof of the feeling of *aware*. A verse appears of itself from the *aware* of things, and thus a master-poet is one who has the clearest understanding of *aware*. The poet cannot resist the impulse to compose. As Saigyō wrote—"All who compose verses for the sake

[1] Also quoted on p. 44.

of consolation do nothing but increase their own feeling. There is no benefit in grieving or admiring so much, but when there is much to be felt the words come forth of themselves."

He raises the question why the verse is made when one is moved by the *aware* of things, but does not answer it very convincingly. A deaf man cannot hear thunder, and therefore does not think it terrible, and similarly an insensitive man is not affected by *aware*. "But a man who knows the *aware* of things cannot help thinking of it, however hard he may try not to do so." Motoöri does not suggest that a poet finds consolation, but that "he cannot help expressing his thought."

After this there is some discussion of the necessity for lofty style in poetry. Ordinary words cannot touch the emotions of other people, but even the devil can be moved by words of poetical power. "It is said that the gods are fond of beautiful words." A broken-hearted man cannot be consoled in conversational language, he claims. He admits finally that "sometimes a verse is composed purposely, without being delivered spontaneously, to impress people." But poetic language is all the more necessary. Even in such apparently artificial poems there is real feeling, some *aware*, and if there is difficulty in finding words for it, the poet should avail himself of symbols. "Such things

as the moon and wild-geese seem as if they are intended purposely to be taken into verses of this kind, but other illustrations will serve. When a poet is not entirely satisfied with the pleasure of composition, he will show his work to other people, but there is no real benefit to him in this. However, he wishes to please, and he must therefore use the best possible language and style. And naturally, the more people are moved, the more a composer's heart will be refreshed." Thus we are led to see that style itself can produce the feeling of *aware*.

The latter part of this savours a good deal of our English eighteenth-century ideas, though there were not, of course, any interchanges of thought between the two countries. The highest type of criticism was reached in Bashō's conceptions of the nature and purpose of poetry, which he discussed as though it were the Way itself; and in Kyusō's interpretation of Saigyō's verses. Kamo Mabuchi (1697–1769), in *Bun-i-ko*, is enthusiastic rather than discerning, an advocate of the older poetry. He says: "I think nothing is so beautiful as things which are seen in afterthought through the veil of the past." The Japanese estimate their literature highly, and rightly so, although it is still impossible for more than a few to make a true comparison with the literatures of the West. A fuller comprehension of these, through closer study and more suc-

cessful translation, may cause a readjustment of values.

The most striking fact which a student of Japanese literature notices is that the East was hundreds of years ahead of the West in responding to the influence of natural beauty, and in comprehending to some extent the Reality behind the symbols. St. Francis of Assisi (1182–1226) was born two generations later than Saigyō, and Saigyō is the culmination of centuries of Nature-worship. In England, Vaughan and Traherne are exceptions as regards their outlook, and they had little influence on their contemporaries; it was left to Wordsworth to interpret our sensations in the presence of a sunset or a "host of daffodils," to explain *mono no aware* and *yūgen*. It is true that Wordsworth as a poet was greater than any Japanese poet in that he gave fuller expression to a complete understanding and confident assurance; but he was not handicapped by any literary convention which would have made him give utterance to his thoughts in isolated verses of thirty-one or seventeen syllables. If Bashō had revealed himself to us in a "Prelude" as fully as Wordsworth did, the comparison might have been different. Some of the Japanese who have written poetry were certainly full of the spirit which enabled Blake—

> "To see a world in a grain of sand,
> And a heaven in a wild flower."

That they did not express themselves more passionately in their writings may be set down to many causes—their national character, their literary tradition, the difference between Buddhist and Christian ideas of life, or their quiet acceptance of what were not new truths to them. Religion and Nature-worship, if we judge from the poetry which is admittedly influenced by Buddhism, and especially Zen Buddhism, have at times blended very successfully in Japan, for the Japanese were brought to see in natural beauty a most satisfying proof of God, and by their strong attraction to it were helped to recognize the divine in themselves.

Nature mysticism is the same in Japan and in Western countries, but the Japanese have been under its influence for more than a thousand years, and it is so wide-spread that, in varying degrees, it is virtually a national characteristic. Purely religious mysticism, on the other hand, does not, as we have seen, find much direct expression in literature, though its influence is very apparent. But Enlightenment and Salvation are essentially the same—the entry of man into a conscious union with the rest of creation or with God which brings to the heart and mind peace.

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